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Development of the Lower Flathead valley

Hugh John Biggar
The University of Montana

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOWER FLATHEAD VALLEY

By

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PREFACE

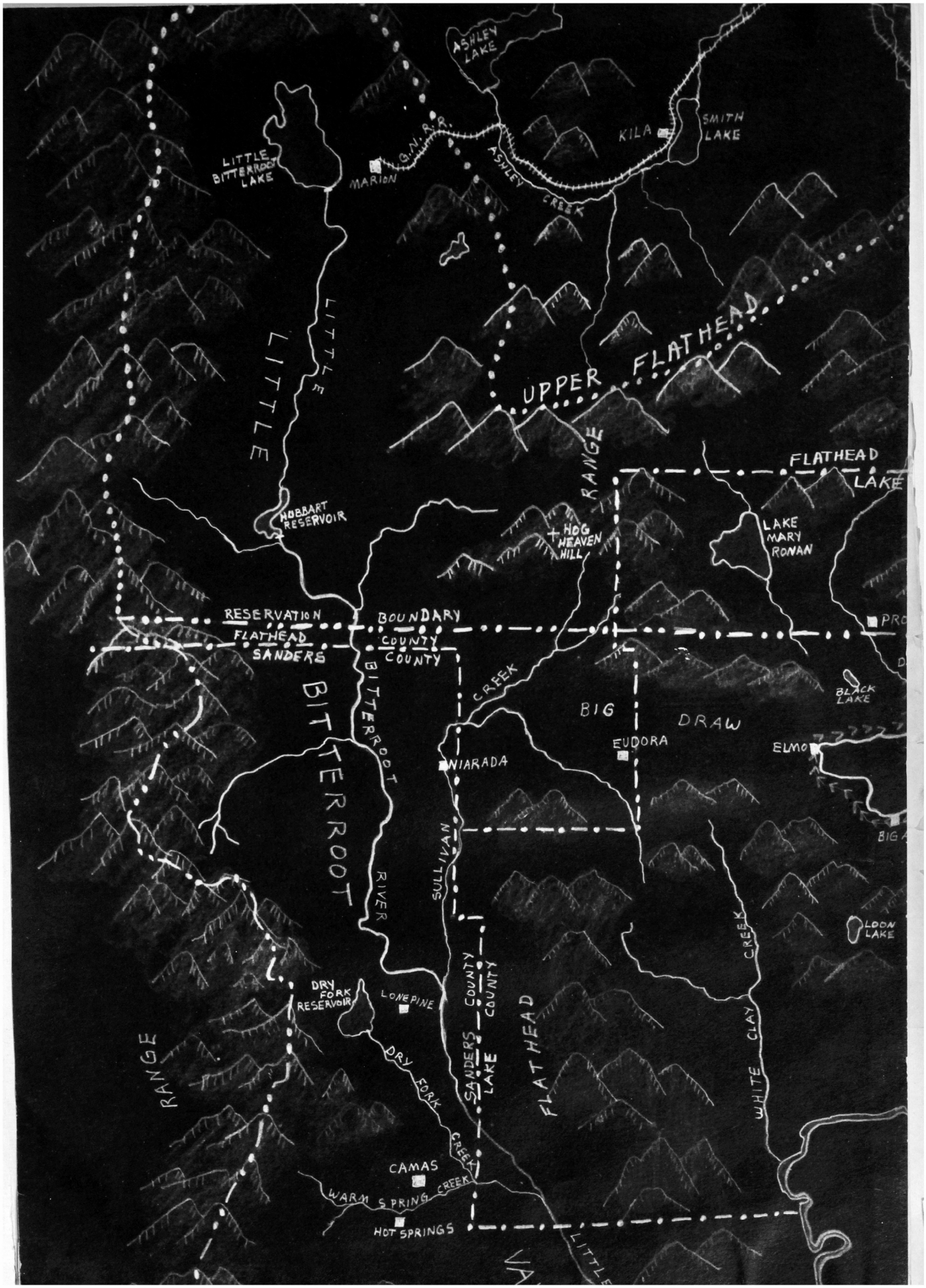
The writer has long been interested in the history of northwestern Montana. When presented with the necessity of choosing a thesis subject, the choice was no problem. Another writer had written the story of the development of the extreme northwestern portion of the state, consequently, this writer was forced to confine himself to the area to the south, the Lower Flathead Valley.

In the early chapters of this work, much emphasis has been placed on the events which took place in the southern portion of the valley, primarily because little occurred in the northern portion until the late 1880's. The later chapters emphasize development in this northern part because about this area little had previously been written.

Few problems other than selection of material arose in the composition of the first four chapters since many published primary and secondary sources were available. Material for the last four chapters, on the other hand, had to be searched for diligently. A number of research trips had to be made to various parts of the area, people were interviewed, and newspaper files were examined.

Without generous aid from Mr. Thain White, a prominent sheep raiser and land owner who lives on the west shore

of Flathead Lake and who is intensely interested in the history of the area, much of the necessary research could not have been done.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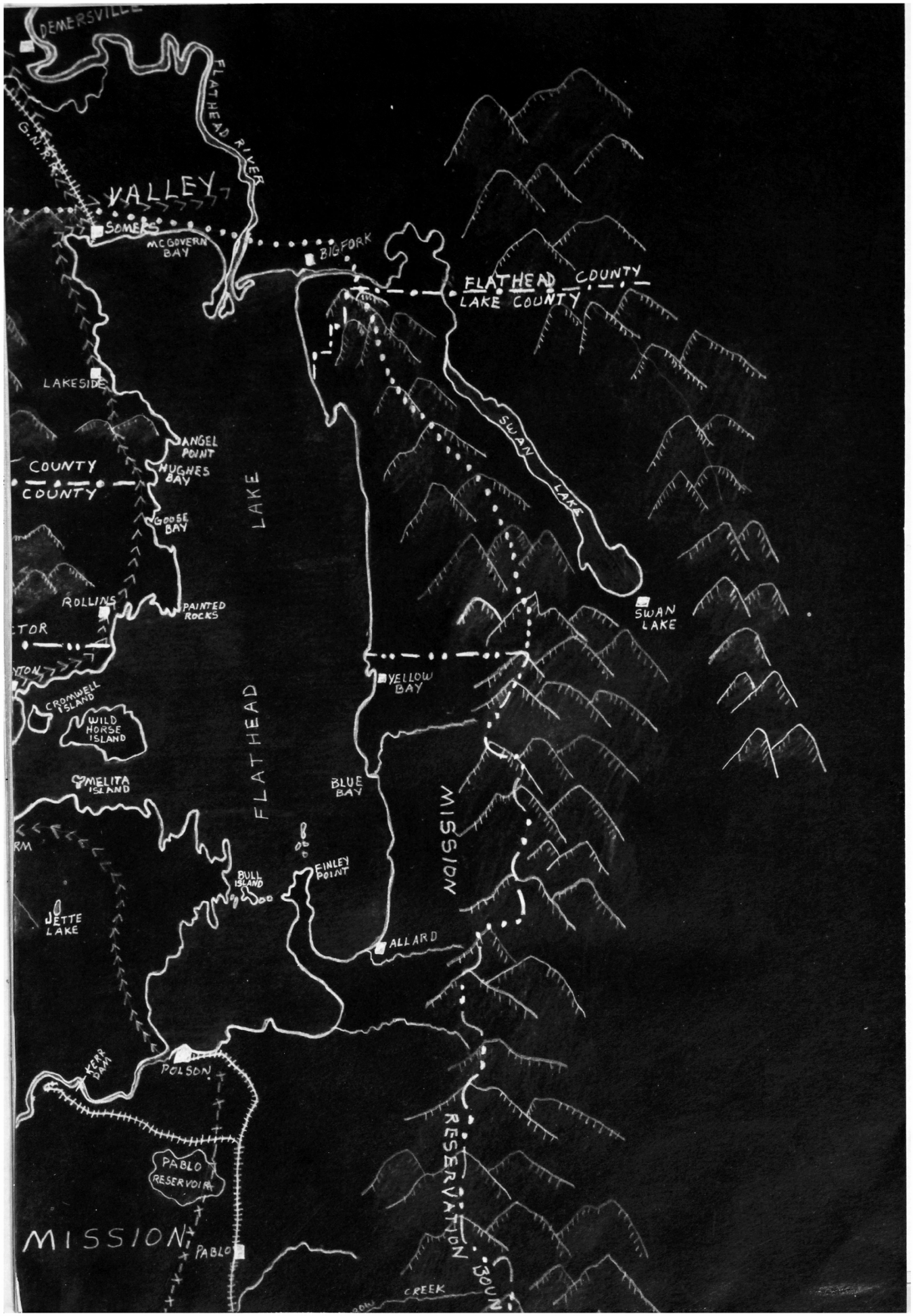
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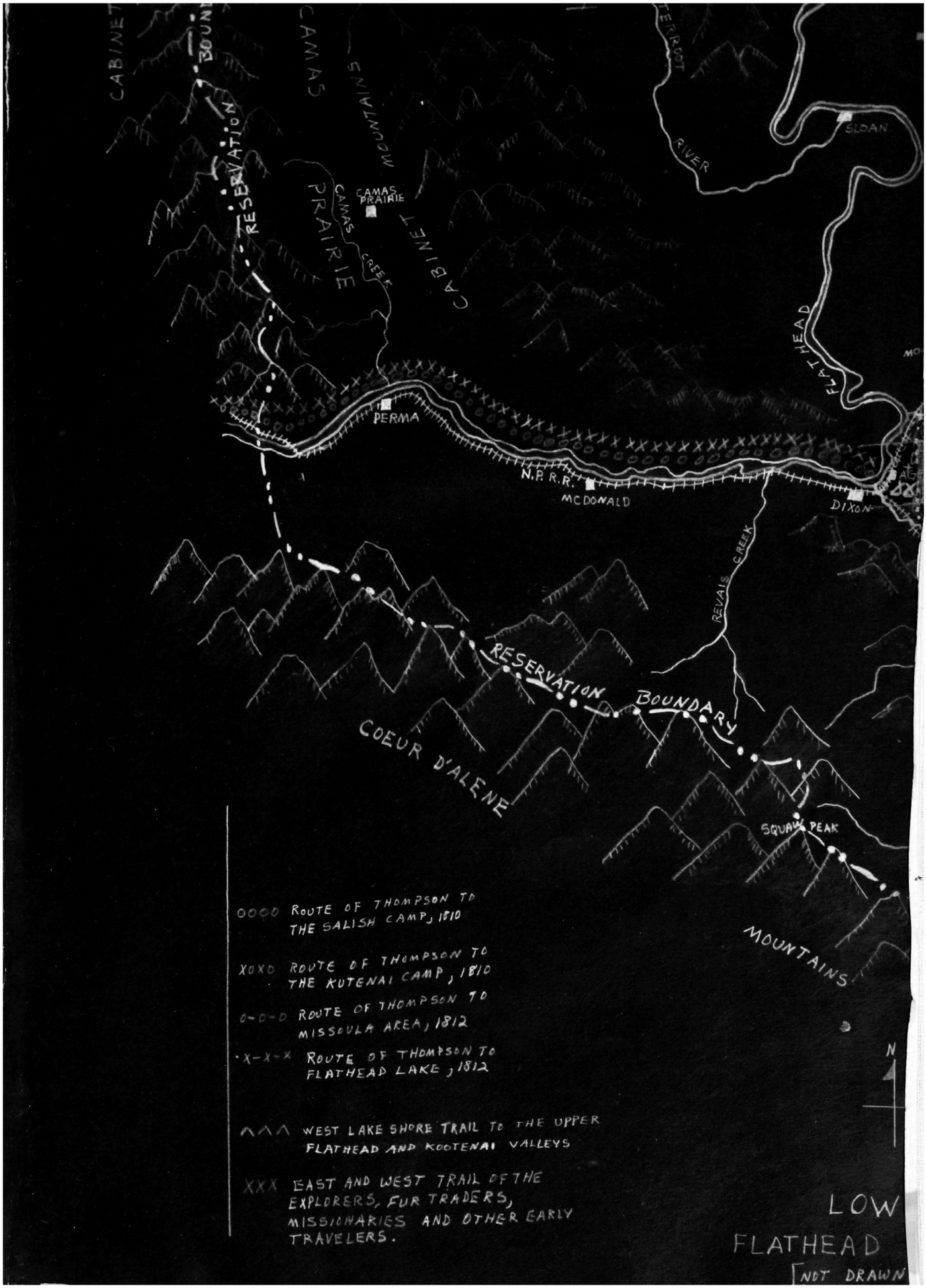
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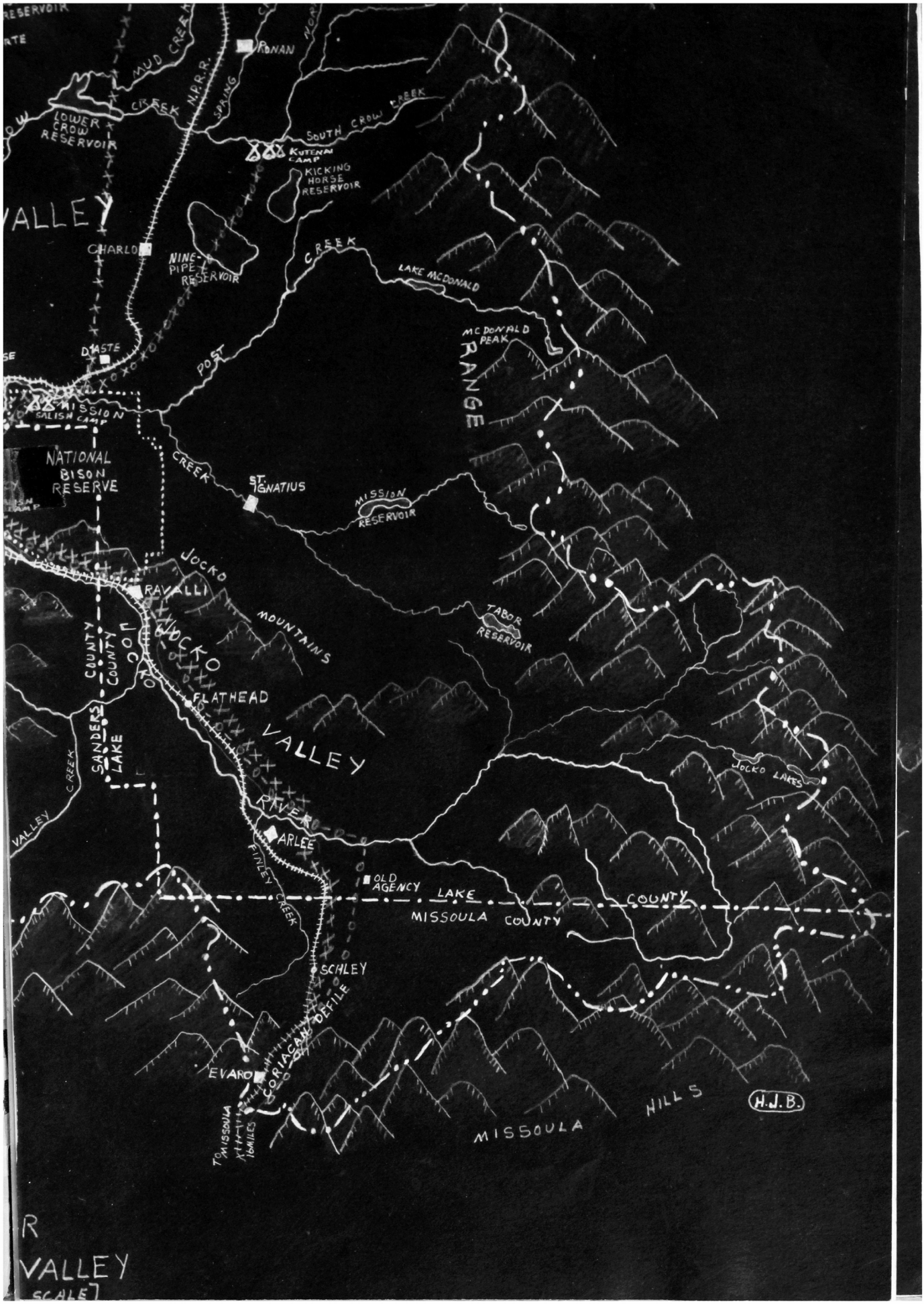
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CHAPTER I

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

The story of the development of Lower Flathead Valley in northwestern Montana might well be the story of the development of many other areas which, at one time or another, were a part of the American frontier. It is the story of a geographic region which, only a century ago, was almost unknown and of no importance except to the few primitive people who occupied it. As the story unfolded, the frontier advanced, at first tentatively with the first explorations. Later, as the land and its wealth became known and as outside forces acted, settlement began, became permanent and expanded so that within a surprisingly short time the area was no longer a frontier. It had become the home of thousands of people whose livelihood, in large part, depended upon the resources of the area and who were intimately affected by events and conditions not only in immediately surrounding areas but also in the entire state and nation.

The area in which this development took place, is not, as its name may imply, one large valley. It is actually an area of very diverse topographical features and fairly definite natural boundaries which had a history in many respects peculiarly its own. Most of these peculiarities of history can be credited to the influence of the

physical setting.

Geologically, the Lower Flathead Valley is the southern portion of a well defined depression or zone of low land, the Rocky Mountain Trench, which lies between the main ranges of the western Rockies and which extends northwesterly for more than eight hundred miles from the Jocko Mountains.[1] On the north, the line separating the Lower Flathead from the Upper Flathead is determined as much by historical developments as by topographical features. On the south, Jocko Valley, in some respects a separate geological feature, is taken as part of the larger area for the same reasons. To be definite, the Lower Flathead can be defined as the area south and west of Flathead Lake which drains directly into the lake or is drained by Flathead River and its many

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[1] F. C. Calkins and D. F. McDonald, "A Geological Reconnaissance in Northern Idaho and Northwestern Montana," U. S. Geological Survey, Bulletin 384, p. 11. Another authority has said that the trench extends southeastward from the head of Flathead Lake in the valley of Swan River. C. H. Clapp, "Geology of a Portion of the Rocky Mountains in Northwestern Montana," Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, Memoir No. 4, p. 11. However, there is no reason to separate the Mission Range from the main ranges of the Rockies because that range is more typical, in geology and aspect, of the ranges to the east from which it is separated only by the narrow Swan Valley, than it is of the generally lower, less rugged, and more diversely arranged ranges to the west. Geologically, it seems correct to say that the trench continues southward from the head of Flathead Lake because the irregularities in this southward depression are relatively small and largely the result of glacial, not geodynamic, action. See U. S. Geological Survey, Twenty-first Annual Report (1900), IV, 421, for the same view.

tributaries.

This area, more than eighty miles in extreme length and forty miles in extreme width, is bounded on the north by a poorly defined divide, formed by scattered mountain groups of the Flathead Range, which separates the waters flowing into Flathead River above the lake from those flowing into the same river below the lake. Converging spurs of the Coeur d'Alene and Mission ranges form the southern boundary, while the main Mission Range on the east and the southeastern end of the Cabinet Range on the west limit the valley in those directions.[2]

The development of the Lower Flathead began millions of years ago when the present aspect of the area was created by the elevation of the mountain ranges and subsequent erosion by streams and glaciers which filled the valleys

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[2]The northern boundary is largely an arbitrary line because the Flathead Range extends northwestward for a considerable distance. However, this range is made up of scattered mountain groups which force streams to flow in several different directions. The divide between the northward flowing tributaries of Ashley Creek and the southward flowing tributaries of Little Bitterroot River is a convenient line to separate the Upper and Lower Flathead areas. See map. It was suggested that the Flathead Range be called the Selish Range because another range in northwestern Montana is called the Flathead. Clapp, op. cit., p. 14. Flathead is the name which is most commonly used in official publications. See E. R. Erdman, "Geology of Dam Sites on the Upper Tributaries of the Columbia River in Idaho and Montana," U. S. Geological Survey, Water Supply Paper 866, pp. 6-7.

with soil.[3] In late Tertiary times, perhaps two million years ago, a great ice mass covered much of North America and it is known to have occupied many of the mountain valleys of northwestern Montana to depths of hundreds of feet. One lobe probably came down the Lower Flathead as far as Dixon and others blocked the valleys to the east and west. The advances and recessions of this ice sheet gave to the Lower Flathead many of its characteristics. For instance, gravelly soil, large boulders stranded on hillsides, pot holes, rounded hills, and large gravel banks or moraines are all evidences of glaciation which can still be seen. With the retreat of the ice sheet, a four hundred and fifty foot high moraine was left at the foot of Flathead Lake. Water filled the valley north of this barrier, draining through Wild Horse Bay and Big Draw westward to Little Bitterroot River. An unusual rise in the level of the lake caused the water to overflow the moraine where cutting was rapid through the loosely held gravel. This resulted in a lower lake level and a new, the present, outlet.[4] Big Draw was uncovered to become both a passageway through the mountains and an agricultural site.

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[3] D. E. Willard, Montana, the Geological Story, pp. 223-30.

[4] M. J. Elrod, "Lectures on Flathead Lake," University of Montana, Bulletin No. 5, p. 197.

Another effect of the glaciation was the creation of an enormous lake, Lake Missoula, which filled the valleys south of the ice sheet and whose deposits make up in large part the soils of the Lower Flathead. Lake Missoula covered the valleys to the depth of a thousand feet or more because the westward flowing streams were blocked by ice. A prominent feature of the mountains around Jocko and Little Bitterroot valleys are beach lines left by the lake. The presence of these lines, especially noticeable when covered with light snow, indicates that the lake must have occupied the area in comparatively recent geological times, otherwise they would have been obliterated by weathering.[5]

Lake Missoula disappeared when the ice sheet withdrew and except for the continual making of soil and the growth of vegetation, the physical development of the Lower Flathead was complete. The major topographic features which the area presented, and those which most affected its later development under human effort, were its mountains, its drainage system, and its scattered valleys and low places.

Considering the mountain ranges first and one at a time, our attention is struck most forcibly by the Mission Range. This range is about seventy-five miles long and

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[5]Clapp, op. cit., p. 15.

extends in a north to south direction between the Swan and Blackfoot rivers on the north and south, respectively. Weathering and erosion which followed the upheaval of the range left an escarpment of jagged and precipitous cliffs which present some of the most picturesque alpine scenery to be found in the United States. Its western face is especially abrupt and steep, with practically no foothills, and is cut by many ravines and canyons down which tumble small streams to empty into Flathead Lake or larger creeks. For its greater length, Flathead Lake meets the foot of the range so that there is little level land between. The lower slopes of these mountains are heavily timbered, while higher up they are grassy or rocky with patches and clusters of wind-blown trees. Some of the summits of the higher mountains are snow-covered most of the year. A few of the peaks in the central portion reach over ten thousand feet but the range diminishes in height and ruggedness to the north.[6]

At the southern end of the valley, the converging spurs of the Mission and Coeur d'Alene ranges nearly meet at Coriacan Defile, perhaps better known as Evaro Canyon. Actually, there are two spurs of the Mission Range. One, the Jocko Mountains, extends somewhat northwesterly while the other

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[6]Elrod, "Lectures on Flathead Lake," op. cit., p. 197.

lies more southwesterly.[7] Together these mountain groups, along with the eastern end of the Coeur d'Alene spur, known locally as the Squaw Range after its most conspicuous peak, enclose Jocko Valley. These three spurs have a much less diversified or accentuated relief than the major ranges to the north and east. Viewed from high stations they show a rather monotonous expanse of ridges of nearly equal height and few prominent summits.[8] The Jocko Mountains are the lowest of the three groups and have a number of passes which offer relatively easy access to the low land to the north. The two other mountain groups are fairly steep and rugged but few of their peaks rise above six thousand feet.

North of Squaw Range and extending northwestward from near the junction of Flathead and Jocko rivers is the Cabinet Range. The southern portion of this range, which includes several partly separate mountain groups and whose eastern slopes form the western limits of the Lower Flathead area, has about the same aspect as does the Squaw Range, from which it is separated only by the narrow valley of Flathead River. Few of its peaks reach over seven thousand feet and it is much dissected by small valleys which provide

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[7]W. DeYoung and R. C. Roberts, Soil Survey of the Lower Flathead Valley Area, Montana, p. 1; Clapp, op. cit., p. 14.

[8]Calkins and McDonald, op. cit., p. 14.

small areas of agricultural lands. Heavy conifer forests once covered most of the Cabinet and Squaw ranges but they have been much devastated by forest fires.[9]

The last mountain group of importance in the Lower Flathead area is the Flathead Range, a low, irregular mountain mass which begins near the southern end of Flathead Lake and extends northwesterly between the lake and Little Bitterroot River. It is bounded on the northeast by Upper Flathead Valley and on the south by an extent of rolling, broken land which drops down to Flathead River. This range forms an abrupt border to Flathead Lake in only a few places, most of its eastern slope is gradual, and valleys reach far back into the hills. In fact, there are several transverse depressions, occupied by streams and small lakes, which cut this range so that its general aspect is much less well-defined than neighboring ranges. It is partly covered by forests of fir, tamarack, and pine but many of its slopes and the intervening valleys have only a mantle of grass.[10]

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[9]Calkins and McDonald, op. cit., p. 20. As late as 1947 it was said that the physiographic features of these mountains were not yet known in detail. See Erdman, op. cit., p. 6.

[10]No official or professional geological or topographical survey of the area between Flathead Lake and Little Bitterroot River has ever been made and printed material describing the area in adequate detail does not exist. All the sources already cited mention the area but none describe it.

These mountain groups have greatly affected the history and development of the Lower Flathead. Together, they nearly enclose the valley, effectively shutting off direct movements to the east and west. On the east, the Mission Range and the ranges parallel to it, with no passes which can be used by the ordinary traveller, force traffic either to the north through Marias Pass into the Upper Flathead or to the south along the valleys of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork rivers through Hell Gate into Missoula Valley. On the west, the Cabinet Range and the Bitterroot Mountains force traffic either through the Kootenai country far to the north or through the valley of the Clark Fork to the south. For this reason, the Lower Flathead, and especially the area west of Flathead Lake, remained an unsettled frontier area longer than other regions which had less attractive resources. When settlement did come, it was largely from the already settled areas to the north and south.

The Lower Flathead was a necessary link in any communication between the valleys to the north and south. Coriacan Defile offered fairly easy access into Jocko Valley from the south and rough trails along both sides of Flathead Lake, together with the generally smooth waters of that body, allowed travel into the upper valley. Jocko Valley, connecting with the valley of Flathead and Clark Fork

rivers, was part of an east and west route between the Cabinet and Coeur d'Alene Ranges. It was by this route that the first whites appeared in the Lower Flathead, but the mere presence of beautiful scenery and fertile land was not enough to hold settlers. Because of its isolation, few people settled here until farm land became scarce elsewhere.

The Lower Flathead is made up of four large valleys, the Mission, the Jocko, the Little Bitterroot, and that occupied by Flathead Lake. In addition, there are several minor ones along some of the smaller streams, such as that along Dayton Creek. Others are given separate names but are actually parts of larger valleys, such as Camas Prairie, which is a part of Little Bitterroot Valley. There are also higher plateaus and stretches of rolling, broken country, particularly in the area west of the lake.

First and foremost among the various valleys is that which is occupied by Flathead Lake.[11] With its deep blue or green waters clearly reflecting the surrounding mountains

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[11]The lake is about twenty-eight miles in extreme length, fifteen miles in extreme width and two hundred feet in average depth. It has an average width of approximately seven miles, a shore line of one hundred twenty miles and covers an area of one hundred eighty-eight square miles. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Map of Flathead National Forest (1948); U. S. Geological Survey, Twenty-first Annual Report (1900), IV, 241; M. J. Elrod, "A Biological Reconnaissance in the Vicinity of Flathead Lake, Montana," University of Montana, Bulletin No. 10, Biological Series No. 3, p. 123.

and forests, the lake ranks with Mission Range as one of the main scenic attractions of western Montana. Filling the narrow valley as it does, its waters are both a barrier and a highway between the valleys to the north and south. It is roughly rectangular in shape but about a third of the way up the west side a large bay, Wild Horse Bay, extends westward about seven miles from the main body. In this bay lie three islands, Wild Horse, the largest in the lake, Cromwell, and Melita or Wild Goose. Near the foot of the lake, on the east side, a long peninsula juts out north and west and with a chain of small islands nearly cuts the lake into two parts. The narrow passage between the shore and the nearest island is called, appropriately, the Narrows. The surface of the lake is materially affected by winds which blow from the south and during the winter some of the bays or even its entire surface freezes over. In spite of these drawbacks and because the lake occupies nearly the entire width of the valley between the Mission and Flathead ranges, these waters were destined to be not only an important link in the transportation system of the Lower Flathead but also an important aid to the agricultural development of the area.

Of major importance as areas of agricultural possibilities are the valleys south and west of the lake. The largest of these is Mission Valley. Bordered on the north

by the lake, on the south by the Jocko Mountains, on the east by Mission Range and on the west by Flathead River, this valley is about thirty-five miles long and fifteen miles wide. Its level-to-rolling floor lies generally from one hundred to two hundred and fifty feet above the level of the lake. Across its northern end stretches the glacial moraine, four hundred and fifty feet high, through which Flathead River long ago cut its channel. Two stony ridges, three to four hundred feet high, parallel to Flathead River and extending southward from below both Polson and Crow Creek, divide Mission Valley into two minor districts called Valley View and Moiese Valley. About ten miles south of the lake a large sand dune stretches east and west across the valley and the entire area abounds in coulees, depressions, rounded hills, and small scattered ponds which testify to the work of the ice sheet.[12]

South of Mission Valley, across the low Jocko Mountains, is Jocko Valley. Lying on both sides of the river which gives it its name, this valley is shaped like a rough triangle with sides from ten to twelve miles long. Mountains and hills, which are the source of many small streams, surround it on all sides. At the apex of the

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[12]Elrod, "A Biological Reconnaissance...," op. cit., pp. 123-129; DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

triangle, a little southeast of Arlee, the valley is about four miles wide but a few miles down Jocko River it narrows to a canyon before again widening near the mouth of that stream.[13] Jocko Valley is important in the history of the Lower Flathead because its location on a travel route both east and west and north and south made it the scene of activity by whites at a very early period.

Little Bitterroot Valley, one to eight miles wide and about one hundred miles long, is a curved, irregular, somewhat broken plain lying on both sides of the river of the same name. It is separated from the rest of the Lower Flathead by mountains and hills but has two smaller outlying districts, Camas Prairie and Big Draw, and a drainage system, which attach it closely to the other divisions of the larger area.[14]

Flathead Lake, together with Flathead River and its many tributaries, is a major element of the drainage system of the Pacific Northwest. In the area bounded roughly by the continental divide on the east, the crest of Cabinet Range on the west, the 47th parallel on the south, and

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[13] Ibid., p. 1; F. V. Hayden, Preliminary Report of the U. S. Geological Survey of Montana and Portions of Adjacent Territories (1871), I, 252.

[14] O. E. Meinzer, "Artesian Water for Irrigation in Little Bitterroot Valley, Montana," U. S. Geological Survey, Water Supply Paper 400, pp. 9-14.

extending across the international boundary into southeastern British Columbia, nearly all of the drainage which ultimately reaches the Clark Fork of the Columbia is carried into that river by the Flathead. From the north, northwest, and east, the three forks of Flathead River, together with Whitefish, Stillwater, and Swan rivers, bring an immense burden into the lake. Those slopes of the Mission and Flathead ranges which face on the lake drain directly into that body through many small streams.

South and west of the lake all of the drainage goes into Flathead River by way of a large number of both permanent and temporary streams, the most important of which are Mud, Crow, Post, and Mission creeks and Jocko and Little Bitterroot rivers. Flathead River, winding on a southerly course for about twenty-six airline miles, has worn a deep gorge nearly twice that long in the valley floor. Near Dixon the river turns sharply westward to enter the narrow gap between the Coeur d'Alene and Cabinet ranges, through which it flows to the Clark Fork. The Flathead, wide, deep, and rapid during the spring, seems an ideal north and south transportation route. However, a fifteen foot falls a few miles below the lake, together with smaller rapids and shallow places, makes navigation impractical.[15] A mere

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[15] T. W. Symons, Report of an Examination of the Upper Columbia River and the Territory in Its Vicinity in September and October, 1881, to Determine Its Navigability and Adaptation to Steamboat Transportation (1882), p. 17.

important possible use than for navigation for the many streams and scattered bodies of water was for irrigation.[16] As the development of the Lower Flathead progressed, it was soon found that water, which could be used to make crops grow, was perhaps the most important resource of the area.

Taking the Lower Flathead as a whole, well over half of the area is covered with heavy forests of yellow pine, lodge-pole pine, spruce, and tamarack. Most of the forests are found on the mountain slopes, on the hills, and along most of the streams, particularly in the eastern half of Mission Valley. On the valley floors the natural vegetation varies from wheatgrass and bluegrass to sagebrush, depending upon the elevation, soils, and rainfall. Mineral resources are imperfectly known, though it is felt that the area is fairly well mineralized and that important deposits of gold, silver, and copper may be contained in the igneous rocks which are exposed west of the lake.[17]

The several parts of the area differ widely in elevation. The lowest point, 2,530 feet above sea level,

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[16]Other lakes include Lake Mary Ronan, Little Bitterroot Lake, Black Lake, Loon Lake, and Jette Lake, all to the west of Flathead Lake; McDonald Lake and a number of large ponds along the western edge of Mission Range. See Map of Flathead National Forest, op. cit.

[17]G. Sundborg, The Economic Base for Power Markets in Flathead County, Montana, pp. 61-2; R. R. Renne and N. Helburn, Area Analysis, Kalispell-Flathead Subregion, Montana, p. 30.

is west of Dixon along Flathead River. Southeast of Arlee, near the upper end of Jocko Valley, the elevation is 3,579 feet, while at Polson it is 2,949 feet. Soils and climate vary as much as the altitude. About sixty percent of the soils, derived from glacial till and alluvial deposits, is rated from highly to moderately productive, but in some areas nitrogen and phosphorus content is low and acidity is fairly high. In general, the valley soils are fertile and well adapted to the growth of many different crops under modern farming techniques.[18]

The climate of the Lower Flathead is typical of other intermountain valleys. Although the extreme temperatures during the winter and summer show wide differences, from 103 to -30 degrees, the periods of such extremes are never long in duration. Prevailing winds, which seldom are of high velocity, are from the west and southwest. Precipitation, which is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year, gradually decreases toward the west and may vary considerably from year to year. At St. Ignatius, it averages 16.15 inches per year, varying from 11.85 to 25.15 inches in different years. At Lonepine, in the Little Bitterroot, a seven year record shows an annual average precipitation of

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[18] DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 3, 15-48; Supervisors of the Lake County Soil Conservation District, District Program for the Lake County Soil Conservation District, pp. 3-4.

a little more than ten inches.[19]

The Lower Flathead, then, is an area of forested mountains, pleasant fertile valleys, beautiful lakes and rivers, and temperate climate. Surrounded as it is by high mountains which discouraged an early development, by virtue of its location on a north and south travel route, the area was to be greatly affected by events in the great valleys at its extremities. When the development of the Lower Flathead did begin, the details and direction of that process were to be determined a s much by the physical setting as by the hopes and efforts of the human actors.

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[19] Ibid., p. 2; DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE THE WHITES CAME

The original inhabitants of the Lower Flathead, the Indians, were the first to use the resources of this area but did little to develop them until they came under the tutelage of the whites. For nearly a hundred years after they came under this influence, the Indians were responsible for most of the development which took place. It has been only in the last fifty or sixty years that the whites have taken the lead in building homes, farms, and industries. Today, those of Indian blood remain an important factor in local social and economic life, so it is proper to consider in some detail the heritage that they give to the Lower Flathead.

The area has been, at least in historical times, the common home of parts of three tribes, the Salish, popularly known as the Flatheads, the Kalispel, popularly known as the Upper Pend d'Oreille, and the Kutenai.[1]

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[1]Different spellings for these names appear in many different writings. The spellings used here are as used in official publications. See F. W. Hodge, Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, I, 646, 740-41; II, 415-16. The so-called Pend d'Oreille tribe has been divided by some authorities into Upper and Lower branches. The Indians themselves object to this division and maintain that they are all Kalispels. The division of the Kutenai into Upper and Lower branches has geographical and slight cultural legitimacy. H. H. Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai (American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 56), p. 9.

As for the prehistoric inhabitants of the area and their culture, and the origin of the historic tribes, there is very little agreement even among the experts. The written history of the Indians began only with the coming of the whites. Many of the early explorers and fur traders kept some kind of diary or journal and it was in these that the first written records of the Indians appeared. From that time on, the history of the Indians became part of the history of the whites. The length of time covered by this written history for western Montana is only about one hundred and fifty years and to get a picture of Indian life before that time, one must turn to archeology and anthropology.

Before accepting the theories put forth by investigators in these fields, one must examine the kinds of evidence used to formulate opinions. Most important among the evidences are ancient artifacts, physical characteristics, linguistic classification, environmental and cultural relationships, and possible truths contained in tribal legends and traditions. None of these alone can give a true picture of what is being sought, and all of them together give at best an incomplete history of the people concerned. If the theories given in answer to questions about the prehistory of the Lower Flathead are not based on a complete and careful examination of all these evidences, they cannot be considered anything but tentative and probably subject to

great error. Theories based largely on legends and traditions, which seem to be the most readily available evidence where some Indian tribes are concerned, are especially suspect. The value of this kind of evidence is limited by the good faith of both the narrator and the interpretor, accuracy of memory over several generations, and the possibility of misinterpretation by the investigator. Unhappily, the theories about the prehistory of the Lower Flathead have so far appealed to little else than legend and tradition and any questions which may be asked about the subject cannot be answered completely. The best that can be done is to examine the possibilities.

In the first decade of this century, Mr. J. A. Teit, an anthropologist of note, spent about a week in western Montana while mapping the Salishan dialect. The results of his work, published in 1930, contain his theories of the prehistory of this region. He did little or no excavating and his theories were based on a somewhat brief examination of historical culture, a few archeological specimens then available, and traditions and legends as translated by one interpretor.

According to Mr. Teit, in early times there was a "Flathead group" of Indians consisting of six tribes, the Flathead proper, the Pend d'Oreille, the Kalispel, the

Spokane, the Semtē'use and the Tunā'xe.[2] Because of confusion in nomenclature and the lack of even hints as to the sequence of events, it is impossible to follow closely the movements of these tribes. Furthermore, apparently contradictory statements add to the confusion and completely destroy the validity of some of his conclusions.[3] For what it is worth, Mr. Teit's informants told him that long ago two tribes inhabited parts of the Lower Flathead. The "Wide-head" or "Flathead" people lived in Jocko and Bitterroot valleys and the "Leg-people", ancestors of the Salish of today, lived to the south and east, probably centering in Deer Lodge, Jefferson and Broadwater counties. Later, both lived together in Jocko and Bitterroot valleys and the "Wide-heads" gradually gave up the practice of flattening their children's skulls under the impact of a new culture. The ancient material culture of these peoples appears to have been influenced by the Plains and Plateau cultures

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[2] J. A. Teit, "The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateau," Bureau of American Ethnology, Forty-fifth Annual Report (1927-28), p. 295.

[3] Ibid., pp. 309, 326. On page 309 he indicates that before the coming of the horse the Flatheads lived east of the Rockies. On page 326 he wrote that the Flatheads have had almost all of the traits of a typical Plains tribe for at least 200 years but that previous to the introduction of the horse their material culture most closely resembled that of the Plateau area. It seems unlikely to this writer that a tribe living on the Plains would have a Plateau culture. These statements are completely contradictory.

from the east and west.[4]

As for the tribes of the "Flathead group", Mr. Teit said, without indicating when, that the Pend d'Oreille occupied all of the Flathead lake and river country and to the west of them lived the Kalispel. East of the Rockies from north to south below the present international boundary lived the Kutenai, Semtē'use, Tunā'xe, and Flatheads. Occasionally, the last two tribes journeyed into the mountains and their whole range probably covered the southwestern quarter of the present state of Montana. At an undetermined time the Semtē'use and Tunā'xe were exterminated as distinct tribes and the Kutenai and Flatheads were forced west into Pend d'Oreille country by aggressions of the Blackfeet and other Plains tribes from the north and east.[5]

Both before and after the migration of the Flatheads and Kutenai there was a steady filtering of cultural elements between the Plains and Plateau through the Lower Flathead and the local culture retained characteristics of both. Stone was used for arrowheads, spear heads, knives, pestles, hammers, and pipes. There was little wood or bone work but painting and dying were used extensively. Hair, bark, and twine were used in weaving bags by all the tribes

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[4] Ibid., pp. 295, 326.

[5] Ibid., pp. 303-09, 316.

except the Salish. The Kalispel were noted canoe people, the Salish much less so. Roots, berries, and fish formed a large part of the diet of all the tribes except the Salish, who continued to hunt bison on the Plains twice a year. Later, all three tribes combined for safety and went to hunt bison. Many of the Kutenai who did this failed to return to their own country to the north and instead made winter camps around Flathead Lake.[6]

To sum up Mr. Teit's theories, the Lower Flathead was first inhabited by the "Wide-heads" and the Salish and Kutenai lived east of the Rockies. At an undetermined time these two tribes were forced west into the mountains and valleys and their culture became marginal between those of the Plains and the Plateau.

Another theory is that of Dr. Harry Hobert Turney-High, who did most of his work in the Flathead area in the 1930's and early '40's while on the staff at Montana State University. The results of his work were published as Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association. Though Dr. Turney-High should have had ample opportunity to investigate both past and present cultures in this area, he was concerned mainly with readily available evidences and traditions of prehistory and his works deal very little with

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[6] Ibid., pp. 319, 326, 341, 349.

archeology. Such archeological evidence that he does mention was found by amateurs and he dismisses it rather shortly, being content to draw conclusions from, and even state as fact, the stories told to him by his Indian informants.[7]

According to Dr. Turney-High, the original inhabitants of the Flathead area were a group of Indians known to historic tribes as the "Foolish Folk". Actually, they were Teit's Semt$\check{e}$'use, a Salishan people about whom has grown up a great mass of near fairy tales which obscures the truth. Their material culture is little known but is believed that they lived in holes in the ground, wore no clothes, and hunted and fished. They had arrow points of a black stone not used by historic tribes and made metal beads of raw copper and zinc. In appearance they were very dark, short, powerful, and had a narrow, sloping head which accounted for their "foolishness". In the end their stupidness decimated them, for most of them died following their chief over Spokane Falls.[8] The Lower Flathead was inhabited by many different people from time to time. Tribes had come

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[7]H. H. Turney-High, The Flathead Indians of Montana (American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 48), pp. 18-21. About four pages out of 161 in this work are devoted to two archeological finds by amateurs. No mention is made to archeological evidences in his work on the Kutenai.

[8]Ibid., pp. 15-17.

and gone and there were so many traditions that even the Indians lost count. However, everyone found the "Foolish Folk" here, no one liked them and both the Kalispel and Salish waged a war of extermination against them.[9]

As for the origin of the historic tribes of this area, Dr. Turney-High maintains that the Salish and Kalispel came from the west while the Kutenai came from the east. At a distant point in the past, the Kalispel came east from near Sandpoint, Idaho and when they arrived the country was occupied by the "Foolish Folk". Shortly afterwards, some of the Tunā'xe left the area around McLeod, Alberta, for an unknown reason, and settled in the Kootenai River area in northwestern Montana, northern Idaho, and southeastern British Columbia. These people later became the Kutenai who separated into Upper and Lower branches. Later, a few of the Upper Kutenai who had been living near Libby and Jennings moved southward and settled in the Somers and Elmo areas of Flathead Lake.[10]

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[9]Dr. Turney-High wrote that, "The true autochthonous inhabitants were a race of dwarfs...about two feet and a half to three feet tall. Ibid., p. 13. Autochthonous is defined as indigenous, native, aboriginal, in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (2nd edition, 1949). Dr. Turney-High's choice of words not only in this case but throughout his works, greatly detracts from his scholarship. It is impossible to know if statements such as these are to be taken seriously because his thoughts are not distinguished from those of his Indian informants.

[10]Turney-High, Ethnography of the Kutenai, pp. 9-14.

Later, at an undetermined date, the Salish arrived in the Lower Flathead, probably from the upper Klamath region in Oregon. These newcomers were part of a tribe who had quarreled and fought over whether ducks quacked with their bills or their wings. The losers of the fight had agreed to find a new home and had thus came to the Kalispel country. That tribe, seeing that the Salish were peaceful, allowed them to remain. The two tribes lived together peacefully for centuries, their cultures blended to a marked degree, and language differences nearly disappeared. This was the situation when the whites appeared on the scene.[11]

Dr. Turney-High, then, holds an opinion concerning the origin of the Salish which is exactly opposite that of Mr. Teit.

The latest and perhaps most important archeological and anthropological work in western Montana is that which is being carried on by Mr. Carling Malouf of the staff of Montana State University. Since this work is still in progress and Mr. Malouf has not as yet published the results of his investigations, it is too early to predict what his theories will be. He and Mr. Thain White, a rancher living on the west shore of Flathead Lake, have made several archeological discoveries which, when combined with what is

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[11]Turney-High, The Flathead Indians of Montana, pp. 12-13.

already known and what may yet be found, may throw more light on the subject.

Tentatively, Mr. Malouf believes that the Salish and Kalispel have lived in western Montana in general and the Lower Flathead in particular for a long, long time. Whether or not some other tribe or tribes preceded them is not conjectured and where the historical tribes came from is not definitely known. Archeological evidence points to at least three different cultural periods which shade into each other and which perhaps involved different tribes. There are no stratified sites to aid in dating archeological discoveries. Instead, artifacts are found in at least three different levels or terraces above the present shore line of Flathead Lake. This is probably due to the fact that the surface of the lake has lowered considerably over a long period of time as Flathead River cut itself a deeper channel. The comparatively level west shore provided ideal camping places and as the level of the lake fell, the camp sites were moved down the slopes to be near the water. Thus in the highest level above the lake are found the oldest evidences of culture, the second level is intermediate in age, and the lowest, or that nearest the present lake shore, is the latest.

Though the levels shade into each other, in each are found projectile points, pestles, scrapers, and parts

of knives and malls which by size, shape, and substance seem to belong to a particular cultural level. The artifacts from the oldest level are of basalt and are relatively long and broad. This seems to indicate a close cultural affinity with the Plateau tribes to the west. In the second level the artifacts begin to show a slight Plains influence. Points are shorter and narrower and some flint is present. The latest cultural remains show a tremendous Plains and white influence. Flint largely replaces basalt for points which are shaped and notched in the Plains manner. The heavy grooved hammer, an implement of much importance to the hunter tribes as necessary to break the bones of large animals, and the artifact perhaps most typical of Plains culture, is relatively abundant.[12] Glass and rolled copper beads are also found, indicating actual or secondary contacts

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[12] C. I. Malouf, unpublished notes and manuscripts. Much of this information was gained by the writer from conversations with Mr. Malouf and on field trips to archeological sites around Flathead Lake. Typical Plains traits include limited use of vegetable foods, no fishing, no permanent dwellings, no water transportation, little basketry or pottery, no true weaving, highly developed skin work, poor wood and bone work, flint and obsidian points, heavy grooved hammers, dependence on the bison and a nomadic life. Typical Plateau traits include extensive use of salmon, deer, roots and berries, use of digging tools, semi-subterranean winter houses, movable mat or rush covered tents and lean-to summer houses, water transportation, basketry, weaving, clubs, fish spears, hooks, traps and nets, deer skin work highly developed and fair wood work. These traits are not exclusive. Franz Boas, et. al., Anthropology of North America, pp. 59-61, 78-82.

with the whites.

The main sites in which archeological evidences have been unearthed are near Bigfork, Dayton, Elmo, Polson, and in Big Draw, on Cromwell Island, and at scattered places along the lake shore and stream valleys throughout the region. Besides the artifacts which have been mentioned, a number of human skeletons have been excavated in some of the sites, particularly near Dayton and Elmo, and on Cromwell Island. No definite conclusions have been formulated concerning these finds, but it is probable that most of them date back no more than several hundred years.

Several of the cliff faces bordering the west shore of the lake and along Flathead River near Perma, bear pictographs whose origin is unknown even to the present Indians. The drawings, which consist of a number of vertical markings, crude representations of animals, probably deer, moose, and bison, circles, and unidentifiable smudges, were made with iron oxide. Legend has it that they were drawn by spirits but probably they were the work of Indians on their spirit quests or were intended as messages for others.

All of these opinions and theories do little to clarify the subject of the origin and early culture of the Indian inhabitants of the Lower Flathead. About all that can be said positively is that the Indians who occupied the area in prehistoric times seem to have had a culture

marginal between those to the east and west. The area was probably inhabited by different tribes at different times and there is a strong possibility that the Salish and Kutenai arrived some time within the last three hundred years. Mr. Teit's theory that these two tribes were driven west by the Blackfeet and other Plains tribes, probably in the early 1700's, may be near to the truth. The Kalispel had probably been in the Lower Flathead for a long time before the arrival of these two tribes from the east and were perhaps the original inhabitants of the area. Whatever the answers to these problems, they probably will never be fully known.

Information about the Indians and their way of life in historical times, in this case since about 1805, is much more trustworthy than that with which we have been concerned. The material culture, social and political organization, spiritual beliefs, and day-to-day life of these tribes have been so well reported in the studies of anthropologists and in the journals and records of early explorers, fur traders, and missionaries that there is little point in more than summarizing them here. In this respect, the three tribes can be treated together.

The traditional home of the Salish was in Bitterroot Valley but they can also be considered as having homes in the Lower Flathead. Much of their vegetable food, particu-

larly the bitterroot and camas, were obtained from fields in Camas Prairie and along Crow Creek. In this area they also fished and hunted deer, elk, and small game.[13] Though their range covered much of western Montana, their food quest forced many of them to make their homes, at least temporarily, in the Lower Flathead.[14]

The Upper Kutenai, who have in historical times lived in the Lower Flathead, had for their range an area which included nearly all of the valley. Their main camps were near Flathead Lake at Somers, Dayton, and Elmo and some of them lived more or less permanently among the Kalispel in the valleys both south and west of the lake.[15] Of the three tribes, the Kalispel were most generally spread over the Lower Flathead. Their range included all of that valley

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[13]Teit, op. cit., p. 341.

[14]Just how this tribe came to be called the "Flatheads" has been much debated. One authority maintained that the name was given by neighboring tribes because the Salish, in contradistinction to many of the tribes farther west, had normal heads, that is, flat on top. See Hodge, op. cit., II, 415. Another suggests that they may have arrived in western Montana with flattened frontal bones and under the impact of other cultures gave up the practice. See Turney-High, The Flathead Indians of Montana, p. 12. The Salish bitterly deny that they ever followed the practice of deforming their children's skulls and it is possible that the name "Flathead" was applied by whites who misunderstood the Indian expression for the phrase "the people". When asked who they were, the Salish would tap the sides of their heads and say, "Salish", meaning by this word and gesture that, "We are the people." This could be taken to mean "Flathead".

[15]Teit, op. cit., p. 319.

and extended westward around Pend d'Oreille Lake and the river of the same name in Idaho and Washington.

Perhaps the most important aspect of their life, and that which bound them together while making them belong to neither the Plains or Plateau cultural divisions, was their food quest.[16] Lacking knowledge of agriculture, the activities of these tribes were arranged to coordinate closely with seasonal changes in local plant and animal life, their food quest centering about bison hunting on the Plains and gathering roots and berries, along with some fishing and hunting of deer, elk, and small game, in the Lower Flathead. As among most hunters and gatherers, the men were responsible for the animal food products, while the women gathered the vegetable staples. The most important plant foods were the bitterroot, camas, wild onions, several kinds of berries, and the inner bark of the yellow pine.[17] During the spring

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[16]Except where otherwise indicated, the following information about the Indian culture was taken from the works of J. A. Teit and H. H. Turney-High which have already been cited. Both of these authors covered the same material in much the same way and their works are mainly a discussion of culture. See Teit, op. cit., pp. 295-350; all of Turney-High's work.

[17]Many large trees along the west lake shore and in Big Draw have been partially debarked. According to Baptiste Mathias, the present chief of the Flathead Lake Kutenai, this was done to get at the inner bark which was used for food. In April, 1951, borings were made in a number of these trees and the annual rings were counted to determine the approximate date at which the debarking

and summer the tribes broke up into small family groups which scattered to their favorite vegetable and berrying grounds, primarily in Little Bitterroot and Crow Creek valleys and at Camas Prairie. While the women were gathering, preparing, and storing roots and berries, the men were fishing, or hunting for deer, elk, moose, mountain goats, gophers, muskrats, other small animals, and game birds.

Unlike the Plains tribes, the Indians of Lower Flathead Valley depended to a considerable extent upon fish for food. Trout, whitefish, squaw-fish, suckers, and several unidentified species were caught in most of the local streams. Salmon were probably the most important food fish but as only a few of these ran in the streams draining westward out of Flathead Lake, the Indians were forced to travel across the Cabinet Mountains for their supply of this fish. Salmon were caught with weirs or were speared, while hooks and lines, deadfall traps, nooses, and dipping nets[18] were used to

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occurred. The highest ring count was about one hundred and forty-two, so it is probable that the particular tree was debarked in about 1809. The practice is still in use, at least by some of the older Indians.

[18]Turney-High, The Flathead Indians of Montana, pp. 33-34. This authority wrote that the Salish never used nets but David Thompson, on October 12, 1809, stopped at present Heron Rapids on the Clark Fork where he found three tents of Salish catching "herring" with a small dipping net. See M. C. White, editor, David Thompson's Journals Relating to Montana and Adjacent Regions, 1808-1812, p. 46.

catch the other fish.

The hunting of big and small game in the Lower Flathead was largely an individual effort and was carried on throughout the year, although some stalking was done by small groups in the fall when the animals were in the best condition. Besides the meat that the larger animals furnished, their skins were used for moccasins, clothing, robes, tepee covers, and parfleches. Until the fur traders came, the small fur bearing animals were trapped only occasionally and their furs, especially that of the weasel, were used mainly for winter hats and trappings or ceremonial garments.

The food quest of these Indians periodically took many of them out of the Lower Flathead to the Plains and involved them in bloody wars with the Blackfeet. The Kalispel, the Kutenai, and especially the Salish, maintained a traditional practice of going eastward several times a year to hunt bison and this right was vigorously disputed by the Blackfeet. The Kalispel and Kutenai usually went on these hunts in July and October, returning each time to their western homes around Flathead Lake. The Salish warriors, on the other hand, remained on the Plains during the winter while their women, children, and the old stayed west of the Rockies.

The Blackfeet would not concede to the three western

tribes the right to come and go peacefully to the Plains and continual warfare resulted. Up to the time that the Plains tribes began to get trade muskets, the western tribes, because of their superior archery and greater bravery, seem to have held their own against the superior numbers of the Blackfeet. With the advent of firearms, however, the western tribes began to lose so heavily that in 1812 it was reported that in a Salish camp of about 60 tents near Mission Creek there were about 20 tents of widows.[19] Ambushes and attacks by the Blackfeet in Marias Pass forced the Kutenai and Kalispel to abandon that route to the bison grounds. They then combined with the Salish to go east by way of the passes to the south. As a result of the Blackfeet attacks, Marias Pass remained nearly forgotten and unused until rediscovered in 1889 by John F. Stevens for the Great Northern Railroad.

Warfare was not confined to that which occurred on bison hunts, though the three tribes were almost always friendly to the tribes west of them. The Blackfeet frequently ventured into Lower Flathead Valley on raiding and horse-stealing parties and efforts which were made to establish peace were of no avail.

The standard habitation of the three tribes was the

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[19]White, op. cit., entry for March 1, 1812, p. 213.

conical skin tepee, which in camp were usually arranged in a circle. Tools and weapons were made of bone, wood, and stone, little weaving was done, and pottery was practically non-existant. Records were kept on notched sticks or on knotted cords.[20] Transportation was on foot, on horseback, or in canoes. The Kalispel and Kutenai used bark-covered or dugout canoes more extensively than did the Salish, who are credited with being the first to secure horses from a tribe to the south.

Politically, each of the tribes was under a semi-hereditary head chief and the individual bands and villages into which each tribe was divided was under a sub-chief. War chiefs, who were usually selected every year but generally held their position as long as their influence was great, led the war parties. A council of old men and the greatest warriors acted in an advisory capacity and sometimes selected a new head chief.

In their religion, the Indians believed in a great variety of spirits, both good and bad. The shaman, or medicine man, was an important person in every band and

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[20] C. Malouf, Kutenai Calendar Record (MS.). This unpublished manuscript describes a record kept by Baptiste Mathias and his father. It originally was a knotted cord but has been transferred to a note book. Dots represent years, crosses are deaths, horizontal lines are births. Occasional historical events are recorded as dots or lines. This particular record covers the period since 1829.

both sexes went on spirit quests to find a guardian spirit. The legends of these tribes abound in stories of dwarfs, giants, and humanized animal characters such as "Coyote." One legend of interest concerns Shining Shirt, a hero claimed by both the Salish and Kalispel. According to the stories, this man, an ordinary Indian, lived long before the whites came. What made him unusual was the fact that he predicted that men with fair skins and long black robes would one day come to teach the truth, to give a new moral law, and to stop the wars with the Blackfeet. After the Black Robes would come other fair skins who would overrun the country. Though they would make slaves of the Indians, they should not be resisted. Shining Shirt also used the sign of the cross. Though the Kutenai do not recognize these stories, they claim that they did observe the week by having a religous dance every seventh day.

Family life was fairly simple. Monogamy was the rule, though the only check on polygamy was economic. Children were well-treated but not pampered. The girls played with dolls, the boys with bows and arrows. Education in life began early because everyone helped to get food. Generally, social control was enforced by ridicule and precept, though whipping by the chief was also used in some of the worst violations. Two virtues that the Indians in this area have been noted for are their meticulous courtesy

and relative virtuousness. All of the early whites commented on these characteristics. Another characteristic which has been much noticed is their pacifism. Though the Salish and Kalispell may have had a few small wars long ago, the tribes were generally at peace with most of their neighbors except the Blackfeet and it has been the boast of the three tribes that they never took the life of a white man in war.

This, then, is the setting into which white men intruded early in the 19th century. With that intrusion the history of the Indians became inexorably bound up with that of the whites. Though for many years the Indians were responsible for much of the development of the Lower Flathead, that development came about only as the result of efforts by the whites to give the Indians a new culture. How well those efforts succeeded was greatly influenced by the old way of living.

CHAPTER III

EXPLORATION AND FUR TRADE, 1809-1871

The explorers and fur traders, though they made little permanent impression on the wilderness, were the vanguard of the westward moving frontier. By making friends with the Indians, starting the breakdown of their primitive society, and by making the country known, they prepared the way for later comers who were looking for savages to civilize or new lands to settle. The southern part of the Lower Flathead, because of its location in relation to mountain passes and river routes, early became the scene of activity by these men. They made little effort to penetrate the area adjacent to Flathead Lake because of the rugged terrain and because the Indians, with whom they traded, were concentrated in the valleys to the south and west.

The first appearance of an explorer and fur trader in northwestern Montana came in 1808 when David Thompson, one of the men entrusted by the Northwest Company with the task of carrying the fur trade westward to the Pacific,[1] reached

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[1]Two British fur companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company, had since about 1784 been in competition for the fur trade east of the Rockies. Each had continually expanded westward and by 1801 the more aggressive Northwest Company was ready to cross the Rockies. See J. Work, The Journals of John Work, edited by W. S. Lewis and P. C. Phillips; White, op. cit., xlc-cxxii. The Introductions of both of these works have excellent descriptions of the early fur trade.

the headwaters of the Columbia and descended Kootenai River. Between April, 1808, and February, 1810, he made several trips through northern Idaho and northwestern Montana, building Kullyspel House on the east shore of Lake Pend d'Oreille in September, 1809, and Saleesh House on the Clark Fork near present Thompson Falls in November of the same year.[2] On one of his journeys during this period, Thompson may have entered Little Bitterroot Valley. In October, 1809, when he was on his way from the Clark Fork to the Kootenai River, it is possible that he may have crossed to the east of the divide separating the drainage of Little Bitterroot River from that of Thompson River. Since his exact route cannot be determined, this is only a conjecture.[3]

Of Thompson's next appearance in the Lower Flathead there is no doubt. After wintering at Saleesh House, on February 23, 1810, he and five companions, Mousseau, Forcier, Boulard, and two Indians, started up the north bank

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[2]White, op. cit., pp. xcix-ciii, 5-87; E. Coues, New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, the Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, II, 671n-675n; Work, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

[3]White, op. cit., pp. 45-53. The editor believes that Thompson's route probably led him east of the ridge separating the Little Bitterroot and Thompson rivers and then west to Fisher Creek. Ibid., pp. 50n-51n. Another authority indicates belief in a route farther to the west, up Thompson River to the vicinity of Hunting Lake and down Fisher Creek to Kootenai River. See Coues, op. cit., pp. 671n-675n.

of the Clark Fork in search of birch bark for a canoe. The night of the 24th and the next day were spent near present Plains and at 8:30 A.M. on the 26th the party set off and crossed the high grassy hills which border Little Bitterroot Valley on the southwest. After traveling for hours over the rough, hilly ground along the north bank of Flathead River, at 2:00 P.M. they arrived at a Salish camp of twenty-one tents located near present Dixon.[4] Here Thompson traded tobacco for meat and discovered that Beaulieu, a French-Canadian free trapper[5] was in the vicinity. The party re-

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[4]White, op. cit., pp. 90, 92n. The location of this camp is largely a matter of conjecture. The party rode for a little over five hours and though the road was "very hard slippery, stony," it is possible that they made the approximately forty miles in that time. Later events and descriptions of the terrain seem to substantiate this as the location.

[5]Ibid., p. 16n. Beaulieu probably crossed the mountains with Thompson in 1807 and was evidently in the Lower Flathead for some time before the latter arrived. The names Francois Rivet, Michel Bordeax, Francois Gregoire, Register Bellaire, Jacco Finlay, Charles Loyer, Hoole, Lolo, Bellanger, and several others appear frequently in these journals. Most of them were French-Canadians or half-breed free traders. It is certain that some of them were in the Lower Flathead area before Thompson arrived. These men generally had Indian families and led a wandering, primitive life. They were not regularly attached to the fur companies and wandered throughout the fur country trapping and trading. It is probable that Jacco (Jacques) Finlay, the most famous of the free traders, trapped and hunted throughout much of the Lower Flathead, including the area west of Flathead Lake, before and after Thompson came into the valley. Thompson made frequent references to him and his family and it appears that he travelled quite extensively. See ibid., pp. 47, 60, 63, passim. One authority wrote that the record shows that Finlay was the first explorer of the headwaters of Columbia River in the Flathead country. See J. A. Meyers, "Jacques R. Finlay," Washington Historical Quarterly, X (1919), 266.

mained at the Salish camp and the next day the Indian chief sent a young man to find Beaulieu so that Thompson could learn the news in order to decide his next movements. Learning that Beaulieu was to be at a Kutenai camp to the northeast, Thompson and some of his men started out at 9:20 A.M. on the 28th. After a hard five hours ride, they arrived at the Kutenai camp.[6] Finding that Beaulieu had not yet arrived, they camped for the night. The next day Thompson engaged an Indian to help him search for Beaulieu and at noon they found him to the north trapping beaver. It was arranged that he come to the Kutenai camp the next day to help prepare materials for a canoe. Thompson then returned to the Indian camp, and though he and his men looked for canoe materials the rest of that day and all of the next,

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[6] Ibid., pp. 91-92. From the description of the country and the time travelled, Thompson's route probably went north up Mission Valley and the Kutenai camp was on South Crow Creek. In his entry for February 28, he describes the country as all meadow to the foot of the mountains, full of brooks and shallow ponds. To the south were high grassy hills but to the north there was nothing but meadows. Later, in an entry for March 1, 1812, describing his journey from the mouth of the Jocko to Flathead Lake, Thompson describes three creeks which he crosses. Of the second, he wrote that it "comes from where I was at the Kootenae Camp 1810." The three creeks were undoubtedly Mission, Crow, and Mud Creeks. See ibid., pp. 213-15. In the entry for March 2, 1810, when looking for birch bark near the Kutenai camp, he wrote that there were many small brooks with cedar, fir, and dwarf birch. This seems like a description of the country near the eastern border of Mission Valley, for there are few woods except along streams and near the mountains.

they could not find birch bark that was suitable.

On the 3rd, as Thompson was preparing to look again for birch bark, Francois Rivet, another French-Canadian, arrived from the Salish camp to the south with the request that he come and prevent the Indians from seizing the property of a white named Courter, who had been killed by the Piegans. With two men, Thompson set off at 11:00 A.M. and four and one-half hours later arrived at the Salish camp where everything was peaceful. The next day was spent in trying to salvage the property of the dead man and in paying off the hunters and Indians for their services. On March 5, Thompson, in company with two hunters and a wounded Indian, set out on the return journey to Saleesh House. That day they crossed Camas Prairie where Jacco Finlay and Martin, an Iroquois, were camped with a few Kalispel Indians, and the next afternoon they reached Saleesh House.[7]

Immediately after arriving there, Thompson began preparing to return to the Salish camp near the mouth of the Jocko. The purpose of this trip was to establish a trade in the valley and on the 7th he engaged two Indians to carry

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[7] Ibid., pp. 92-94, entries for March 3-6. Mr. Courter and the white hunters mentioned in the entries for this period have never been further identified. See ibid., p. 88n. It is possible that they were some of the French-Canadian free trappers; it is less possible that they were Americans because Thompson would have mentioned that fact.

a small assortment of goods to the Salish camp. The next morning he set off himself in the company of a few young men and after a six and one-half hour ride through showers of snow, camped with a band of Kutenai near Camas Prairie. After a hard nine hour ride on the 9th, they arrived at the Salish camp. The next day word came that a party of Piegans had been seen north of Flathead Lake and that the tracks of five Piegans had been seen to the southeast in Jocko Valley. About noon, Jacco Finlay arrived with the news that he had seen a band of suspicious looking people, but about one hundred armed men who went off to investigage soon returned after finding that it was merely a band of Kutenai who were pitching camp to the northwest.[8]

The next two days were spent in trading with the Indians and working on a canoe. The Indians were short of provisions and, though Thompson urged them to kill beaver, his hopes for a large trade in the area were slight. After leaving a small assortment of goods at the camp, Thompson and two Kalispel Indians set off down the Flathead River, arriving back at Saleesh House on the 14th.[9]

Three days later, Thompson started on his third trip

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[8] Ibid., pp. 94-96, entries for March 7-10, 1810.

[9] Ibid., pp. 96-99, entries for March 11-14, 1810.

into Flathead Valley, this time to bring back furs from the Salish camp, at which he arrived on the 19th For four days he traded with the Indians and worked on a new canoe. Early in the morning of the 24th, all the furs and provisions which had been traded were loaded on horses and sent back to Saleesh House in charge of four men and two Indians. The Indians began moving their camp to Camas Prairie where they were to spend the spring and Thompson started down the river in the canoe, arriving at Saleesh House the next day.[10]

David Thompson did not return to Lower Flathead Valley until February, 1812, and in the meantime, Finan McDonald was left in charge of Saleesh House. McDonald's movements during the rest of 1810 and 1811 have not been determined with accuracy but there is reason to believe that he spent some time in the Lower Flathead.[11]

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[10] Ibid., pp. 99-103, entries for March 17-25, 1810.

[11] For Thompson's movements between early April, 1810, and November 19, 1811, see ibid., pp. civ-cxviii. Finan McDonald, while in charge of Saleesh House, during 1810 and 1811, probably visited the Salish camp on Camas Prairie (to which it was moved in the spring for camas season) because on May 7, 1810, Thompson sent a letter to McDonald, who was with the Salish, to send what provisions he could trade to some point on the Kootenai River. See ibid., pp. 113-14. Another authority indicates that McDonald assisted the Indians to use their newly acquired firearms and even accompanied them on a bison hunt, taking part in a successful battle against the Blackfeet. Later in the winter, perhaps early in 1811, he abandoned Saleesh House and with Jacco Finlay built Spokane House to the northwest. See T. C. Elliott, "The Fur Trade in the Columbia Basin Prior to 1811," Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, XV (1914), 284.

The only attempt of the Hudson's Bay Company to compete with the Northwest Company west of the Rockies occurred in 1810 when McDonald was in charge of Saleesh House. The governors of the Hudson's Bay Company, having heard of Thompson's explorations, were anxious to know what he had accomplished and sent Joseph Howse, a clerk, to report on his movements. In the summer of 1810 Howse left Rocky Mountain House in northern Saskatchewan with a supply of trade goods and came south into the Flathead Lake country. The Northwest Company sent James McMillan to shadow Howse.[12] It is not known exactly where Howse spent the winter but it

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[12]Perhaps to Howse and McMillan should go the credit for being the first white men to see Flathead Lake. Just where Howse wintered in 1810-1811 is a matter of dispute. Alexander Ross wrote that "In the course of this day's travel [up the Jocko, Feb. 14, 1824] we made a halt at a spot...where some faint traces of civilization were to be seen. A Mr. Howse...established himself here in 1810..." See his Fur Hunters of the Far West, II, 9. David Thompson, while going from Kootenai River to Saleesh House in 1811, wrote that "they [two Indians] tell me the HB are in the Lake..." See White, op. cit., p. 163; Elliott, "The Fur Trade in the Columbia Basin," p. 250, wrote that Howse may have spent the winter on Jocko Creek, though an early edition of a map of North America shows a Hudson's Bay Post at the head of Flathead Lake. Meyers, "Jacques R. Finlay," p. 165 says that the ruins which Alexander Ross saw on Jocko Creek were those of Jacco Finlay's house and that there is no reason to believe Howse came farther south than the north end of Flathead Lake. Regardless of this difference of opinion, there is definite agreement that Howse was in the vicinity of Flathead Lake in late 1810 and early 1811. It is also probable that there were Americans in the area early in 1811 because on May 27, when he arrived at the deserted Saleesh House from Kootenai River, Thompson wrote that he "wrote a few lines in charcoal on a board in case the Americans should pass...". White, op. cit., p. 172.

is possible that he visited both the upper and lower ends of the Lake. He left the country in 1811 and for ten years the Hudson's Bay Company made little further effort to penetrate the region.

On November 19, 1811, Thompson and his men returned to Saleesh House. Between that date and February 15, 1812, they completed repairs on the buildings and the construction of a new canoe. Three times that winter Finan McDonald went up the river, probably to the Salish camp near present Dixon, to trade provisions from the Indians.[13] On February 15, 1812, Thompson set off up the river for his last and most extensive journey through the Lower Flathead.

The party consisted of Thompson, Finan McDonald, and ten men in two canoes and the primary purpose of the trip was to trade provisions. By the 18th they were at the Salish camp near the mouth of the Jocko. For the next week meat and furs were traded from the Indians and, on February 25, Thompson decided to examine the country to the southeast while McDonald continued trading. He borrowed two horses and an Indian guide and at 10:10 A.M. set off from the Salish camp.

Their trail went up Jocko River nearly to the mountains, then turned south up a hill, and then down through

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[13] Ibid., pp. 180-82, 186-87, 193-97.

Coriacan Defile. They camped that night at the southern end of the Defile, and the next morning continued on to the vicinity of present Missoula. Here Thompson climbed a high hill, probably Mount Jumbo, from the summit of which he sketched the surrounding country and traced the route Lewis and Clark had taken on their earlier journeys through this part of the country. At 10:40 A.M., he and his guide set off again, and in a little more than an hour were back at their previous night's camp. Here they ate, and at 2:00 P.M. started up the Defile into Jocko Valley. Their course led generally north-northwest from the end of the Defile to Jocko River, where they put up for the night. At 8:00 A.M. the next morning, they set off down Jocko River, arriving at the camp on Flathead River about noon.[14]

The 28th and 29th, Thompson and his men were kept busy drying and packing meat into bales, arranging with the Indians to trap beaver, for which it was promised that someone would come to trade in the fall, and holding council with them to consider peace proposals from the Blackfeet. At the council it was decided, on Thompson's advice, not to

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[14] Ibid., pp. 202-8, entries for Feb. 25-27, 1812. Because of the lack of punctuation and the use of incomplete sentences, it is impossible to follow his exact route from the Defile to Flathead River. From the Defile to the Jocko the course ran something like this: N15°W, 4 miles; N12°E, 2 miles; N30°W, 1 1/2 miles; N52°W, 2 miles, and N80°W, 4 miles.

trust the Blackfeet, but to treat them as they treated the Salish and other tribes. During the 29th, Thompson engaged two horses and a guide and prepared for a journey northward to see Flathead Lake and the country around it.[15]

The next day, March 1, he and his guide set off northeastward to a small Salish camp located about an eighth of a mile from Mission Creek. Leaving this camp at 9:10 A.M., they crossed the creek, went up its north bank for about three quarters of a mile, and then turned northeastward around a range of grassy hills. They went on at a smart trot, and at 11:15 crossed Crow Creek. A few minutes later they crossed Mud Creek, and at 1:25 came to a high hill a few miles east of present Polson. From the top of the hill they had an extensive view, and Thompson sketched off the lake and surrounding country. At 3:00 they set off again, arriving at camp at 9:00 P.M.[16]

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[15] Ibid., pp. 208-13, entries for Feb. 28-29, 1812.

[16] Thompson's straight course from the Salish camp on Mission Creek to the lake was N15°E. This would place the Salish camp near present Moiese and his route would have been across Crow Creek about three miles above the mouth of Mud Creek, then northeast close to the eastern edge of present Pablo Reservoir. Ibid., pp. 213-15. This is the first definite record of a visit to Flathead Lake by a white man, though it is possible that other whites visited the lake before 1812. See note 12 above. Finan McDonald may have seen the lake during the winter of 1808-09 when he was trading in the Kootenai area to the northwest, or during the summer of 1810 when he was in charge of Saleesh House. See Ibid., p. 214n; J. A. Meyers, "Finan McDonald--Explorer, Fur Trader, and Legislator," Washington Historical Quarterly, XIII (1922), 199-200.

On March 2, after loading twenty-five bales of meat into a canoe, the entire party set off on the return trip to Saleesh House, where they arrived two days later. After a few days preparation, Thompson went to Spokane House and from there eastward across the mountains, never to return.[17]

About the time David Thompson started for the mouth of the Columbia in 1811, an American fur company, John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, began to intrude into the Pacific Northwest. In April, 1811, Astoria was built at the mouth of the Columbia and the Americans began sending parties or brigades into the interior to trade with Indians in opposition to the Northwesters.

In the fall of 1812, two of Astor's men, Ross Cox and Thomas Farnham, were sent from a new Pacific Fur Company post near Spokane House to oppose Finan McDonald among the Salish. Cox and Farnham, with twelve men and fourteen loaded horses, came into western Montana and during the winter carried on a rich trade with the Indians, including those in the southern part of the Lower Flathead.[18]

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[17] Ibid., pp. 215-22, cxvii-cxx, for Thompson's movements after leaving the Salish camp.

[18] C. Dryden, Up the Columbia for Furs, pp. 44-46; Work, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

The War of 1812 greatly strengthened the position of the Northwest Company which, in 1813, bought out its American competitor. Most of Astor's employees were British subjects, and these, including Ross Cox and Alexander Ross, entered the service of the British company. Cox was ordered to return to Saleesh House to work with James McMillan, who was now in charge there. He arrived on December 24, 1813, and immediately began a very profitable trade.[19]

The Indians of the Lower Flathead were not inclined to trap or hunt the fur-bearing animals as much as the fur traders desired and between 1813 and 1823, the British companies adopted the American practice of sending brigades of trappers through the country. During this period, there is little mention of the Lower Flathead in the fur traders' journals, but they were still trapping and trading in the area, and Flathead Post was still their base of operations.[20] It is probable that most of their activity

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[19] Ibid., pp. 24-25; Dryden, op. cit., p. 60.

[20] White, op. cit., p. cli,n. Saleesh House had been replaced by Flathead Post, built farther up the Clark Fork near present Eddy. This location still left the Lower Flathead open to American traders and in 1830 the post was moved farther up the river. See Work, op. cit., p. 46, 46n.

in the Lower Flathead were confined to the area bordering Flathead and Jocko rivers.

In 1821, after a period of ruinous competition, the two British companies came to terms and combined under the name of the old Hudson's Bay Company.[21] Most of the employees of the Northwest Company entered the employ of the new organization, and, in 1823, Alexander Ross was given charge of the Snake River trade. Late that year he went to the Flathead Post with a large party, and in February of the next year set out for the Snake country. His route led up the Clark Fork, Flathead, and Jocko rivers. For four days the party camped near the lower end of Jocko Valley before going through Coriacan Defile. In November, 1824, Ross returned to Flathead Post, where he assumed command while Peter Skene Ogden headed the brigade for the next year's trapping and trading expedition. In March, 1825, Ross went to Spokane House and soon after went eastward across the mountains.[22]

While the British companies were expanding their trade into the Pacific Northwest, three American organ-

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[21] Ibid., pp. 26-28.

[22] Ross, op. cit., II, 5-14; T. C. Elliott, editor, "Journal of Alexander Ross; Snake River Country Expedition, 1824," Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, XIV (1913), 369-88.

izations, the Missouri Fur Company, Astor's American Fur Company, and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were competing for the trade east of the mountains. By the early 1820's, the brigades of the latter company began penetrating northwestern Montana to oppose the British and gain an advantage over the other Americans. However, only a few Americans came into the Lower Flathead. They did so accidentally and merely passed through or stayed only temporarily.[23]

The appearance of Americans in the Pacific Northwest encouraged the British to strengthen their position, and additional traders were sent to western Montana. Among these men were John Work, James Dease, and Francis Ermatinger. In 1824, Work and Finan McDonald were sent to trade among the Salish, and again in 1825, Work, McDonald, and Ermatinger were in the area. In 1826, Work was at Fort Colville when three Indians arrived from Lake Pend d'Oreille with word that the Salish were indifferent as to whether the British came to trade that year because they had little to dispose of, since they had traded with Americans. However, Work placed little reliance in this story and went

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[23]Work, op. cit., pp. 30-41. In the winter of 1824 and again in the spring of 1828, Jedediah Smith of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company came through the Lower Flathead but carried on little or no trade. See Ross, op. cit., II, 129. Few, if any, American fur traders did more than travel the Flathead-Jocko river trail, probably none of them penetrated the northern half of the Lower Flathead.

to Flathead Post where he learned that the Salish were at Plains with a lodge of Americans, who had only tobacco to trade. The trade from the Flathead area was inferior to the year before and Work went back west.[24]

The Missouri Fur Company, which had been nearly destroyed by trouble with the Blackfeet in 1823, made a tentative effort to establish itself in the northwest in 1828. Late that year, Joshua Pilcher, head of the company, came into the Lower Flathead and perhaps wintered somewhere along the west shore of Flathead Lake. It is not known where he camped, but his description of the lake and valley as "rich and beautiful...and [vying] in appearance with the beautiful lakes and valleys of Switzerland,"[25] indicates that he was perhaps the area's first press agent.

By 1827, the fur trade in the northwest was beginning to decline, partly because of the heavy slaughter. However, Hudson's Bay Company brigades still travelled

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[24]T. C. Elliott, "Journal of John Work," Washington Historical Quarterly, IV (1914), 163-91, 265-72; V (1915), 38-44.

[25]"Joshua Pilcher to J. H. Eaton, Secretary of War," in A. B. Hulbert, editor, Where Rolls the Oregon, p. 161. Pilcher probably spent most of the winter at Flathead Post. His journey was more an inspection trip than a trading expedition and he did not trade in the Lower Flathead. Whether he saw Flathead Lake himself, or heard it described by someone else, is not known.

through the country and Flathead Post was occupied part of the year for the Lower Flathead trade. Americans were still interested in the region as was shown by the appearance of an American Fur Company trader in 1833. This trader, Warren Ferris, came into the Lower Flathead from the south through Coriacan Defile on November 29 in the company of Mr. Ermatinger of Hudson's Bay Company. They went along Jocko River to the Flathead and then cut across the hills westward to Plains, where Ermatinger collected furs from the Indians and half-breeds before setting out for Fort Colville. In the first part of January, Ferris left Plains with the family of a trader, a Mr. Montour, to spend the rest of the winter on Thompson River. In April he returned to Plains, bought goods from Mr. Ermatinger, who had returned to start the summer trade, and on the 23rd, left the valley by the same route he had come in.[26]

Although the fur trade steadily declined after 1827, Flathead Post was still maintained. The gradual influx of Americans into Bitterroot Valley following the establishment of the Jesuit mission there in the early 1840's,

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[26]W. A. Ferris, Life in the Rocky Mountains, edited by P. C. Phillips, pp. 334-51. There is a possibility that Ferris went into the mountains between Little Bitterroot River and Flathead Lake during his stay with Montour. He wrote of the lake being two to three days walk to the eastward and said that the half-breeds who had been at Plains were wintering along the lake. See ibid., p. 245.

prompted its removal to the Lower Flathead. In the summer of 1846, Neil McArthur, clerk of the old post, began building a new one on Post Creek, about six miles north of present St. Ignatius. The next summer, McArthur was replaced because of his inability to get along with the Indians, and Angus McDonald, aided by George Simpson, completed construction. The new post consisted merely of a log building with a bark roof, and a log corral. McDonald named it Fort Connen, later corrupted to Connah, after a river in his native Scotland.[27]

In 1846, the Oregon Treaty had been signed, fixing the northern boundary of the United States at the 49th parallel and providing that the Hudson's Bay Company be compensated for its property south of that boundary.[28] It was not until the late 1860's that the United States paid for the property, and during the interval, Fort Connah was kept in operation. Though the fur trade had declined in western Montana, the new post was important to the com-

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[27] A. J. Partoll, "Fort Connah: A Frontier Trading Post, 1847-1871," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, XXX (1939), pp. 399-400. This Simpson should not be confused with the George Simpson who in 1839 was made Governor of the entire American operations of the Hudson's Bay Company. This Simpson was a minor employee, assigned to Flathead Post in 1847.

[28] R. J. Bartlett, The Record of American Diplomacy, pp. 229-230.

pany because it supplied pemmican, tallow, rawhide and bison hair ropes, parfleches, and horse trappings which were not easily obtainable elsewhere and which were necessary for the transporation of goods on horseback. For this reason, the British company was anxious to maintain the post, even though it was in American territory and friction was bound to develop.[29]

For a few years, trading was carried on in comparative seclusion among the Indians and with occasional whites, but in 1850, John Owen began offering competition from Fort Owen in the Bitterroot. With the Steven's railroad survey in 1853-54, the founding of St. Ignatius mission in 1854, and other events which soon followed, the seclusion of the post was rapidly broken, and opposition to the presence of British traders on American soil became stronger. As early as 1850, Dr. Anson Dart, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon Territory, of which western Montana was then a part, had issued orders that foreign traders were not to operate in Indian territory. The establishment of the reservation in 1855 again brought attention to the fact that the post was on restricted land, and General Stevens gave notice that trading was to cease. The traders, under company orders, ignored these edicts, and, though trade was

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[29]Partoll, "Fort Connah," pp. 402, 404.

small, Fort Connah continued to be an important source of necessities for both the local Indians and a few whites. In the late '50's and early '60's whites came from as far away as Deer Lodge Valley to trade for powder, percussion caps, and other goods, without which life in the wilderness would have been impossible.[30]

There was a brief boom in trade in the early '60's, brought on by the demand for goods from miners passing through to the newly discovered Kootenai gold mines in British Columbia. The state of business soon became discouraging again, and, to make matters more precarious, in 1866 Indian Agent Chapman began urging his superiors to allow him to eject the traders.[31] Chapman was replaced as agent and no action was taken, but the life of the post was drawing to a close. In 1869, a joint commission of British and American representatives signed an agreement settling Hudson's Bay Company claims, and the next year a company official recommended that the post be sold to the best advantage. Early in 1871, Chief Trader Angus McDonald ordered his son Duncan, clerk at Fort Connah, to close the post.

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[30]Ibid., pp. 403, 406-8; G. Stuart, Forty Years on the Frontier, edited by P. C. Phillips, I, 155-183.

[31]"Letter from A. H. Chapman, Flathead Indian Agent, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 3, 1866," in Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior (1866), p. 201.

With that, the era of the fur traders in the Lower Flathead was definitely over.[32]

As a result of the fur traders activities, Jocko and Mission valleys had become well known and the Flathead - Jocko river trail was well established. The lake area had been affected very little by their presence and it was not until settlement had taken place to the north and south that white men came in to stay.

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[32]Partoll, "Fort Connah," pp. 413-14. The company employees in charge at Fort Connah were: N. M. McArthur, 1846-47, Angus McDonald, 1847-53, Michael Ogden, 1853-61, Lachlin McLauren, 1861-65, Napoleon Fitzstubbs, 1865-66, James McKenzie, 1866-67, and Duncan McDonald, 1867-71. See ibid., p. 414.

CHAPTER IV

MISSIONARIES AND INDIAN AGENTS

Even before the fur trade drew to a close, two new forces, missionary activity and government Indian policy, appeared in the Lower Flathead to begin the real development of the area. These two forces, working together or separately, were dedicated to a program of civilizing and settling the Indians, and, though their efforts were not always successful, they were the basis for nearly all of the economic development which took place in the Lower Flathead until 1883.

Missionary activity in the valley before 1854 was confined almost solely to that carried on by Father DeSmet when he passed through Jocko Valley on his way to Fort Colville in 1841 and again in 1842.[1] Later, this pioneering priest went to the Kootenai area by way of the west shore of Flathead Lake, and it is probable that he preached to the Kalispel and Kutenai who were camped along the shore. After these visits and until 1854, the Indians in the Flathead had to travel either to St. Mary's mission in the Bitterroot or to St. Ignatius mission on the shores of

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[1] On his first trip, late in 1841, Father DeSmet gave the names St. Aloysius and St. Stanislau to Finley and Jocko creeks. See L. B. Palladino, Indian and White in the Northwest, pp. 42-49.

Lake Pend d'Oreille for such spiritual and material aid as they desired to receive from the Jesuits. St. Mary's mission was closed in 1850, and, because the Pend d'Oreille mission was subject to flooding when the heavy mountain snows melted, the Jesuits began looking for a more convenient location from which to carry on religious and civilizing work among the Salish, Kalispel, and Kutenai. Such a location was found in 1854 when the Kalispel chief, Alexander, pointed out to Fathers Hoecken and Menetrey a prospective site on a small creek about six miles south of Fort Connah and within a short distance of several bands of Indians.[2]

Within a few weeks, the fathers had built several log buildings, including a chapel, two houses, and carpenter's and blacksmith's shops. Soon, many lodges were erected in the vicinity as Indians from the local tribes arrived to make their home around the new St. Ignatius mission. During the winter, lay brothers Claessens, McGean, and Specht came to the mission with a few head of

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[2]Palladino, ibid., pp. 64-67, 93. When St. Mary's was closed, Father Joset and Brother Claessens started for Lake Pend d'Oreille with four wagons, three carts, and a few head of stock. They went through Coriacan Defile and up Jocko River to Revais Prairie, where they wintered. This journey with wagons and carts in 1850 is the first recorded use of wheeled vehicles in the Lower Flathead. See ibid., p. 91.

stock and construction was continued, with additional aid from Lt. John Mullan. Brother McGean cut more than eighteen thousand fence rails and by the next spring a large field was fenced and under cultivation. By 1856, twelve log houses had been erected, the Indian sick were being tended, and religious work was well underway.[3] In that year the mission, along with the rest of the Lower Flathead, became involved in the events which began to take place as the result of the establishment of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

In 1853-54, General I. I. Stevens, first Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory, had headed a party which surveyed a prospective route for a railroad between the Great Lakes and Puget Sound. The survey, and especially the explorations of Lieutenants Tinkham, Grover, and Mullan north and west of Flathead Lake, had demonstrated that the best route was one which followed the old Jocko and Flathead river trail through the heart of the traditional home of the Salish, Kalispel, and Kutenai.[4] Governor Stevens had been instructed to

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[3] P. J. DeSmet, Western Missions and Missionaries, pp. 299-301, 308-310. Actually, these accomplishments were made with Indian labor and Jesuit supervision.

[4] Report of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practical and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, 1853-54, XII, 164, 178-79, 276.

extinguish Indian sovereignty along the prospective route, and while moving westward, had arranged with all the tribes concerned to return to discuss the problem. In preparation for a council with the Lower Flathead tribes, in September, 1853, he had sent Lt. Mullan to visit the Salish hunting ground on the Musselshell and to bring the chiefs back to the Bitterroot. In his instructions to Lt. Mullan, Stevens wrote in part:

> ...the great duty...is to carry from me a message from the Great Father to the Flatheads. Assure them that the Great Father appreciates their services and understands their merits; that he will hereafter protect them from the incursions of the Blackfeet and other Indians east of the mountains, and make them live as friends, that he will send to them each year certain articles which they most need, and that a faithful and intelligent agent shall live among them.[5]

Such promises were welcomed by the three tribes, primarily because they assured protection against their traditional enemies both on the buffalo grounds and in their mountain homes. In 1854, Stevens appointed Thomas Adams as Special Indian Agent to prepare further for the council.[6] Early in July, 1855, Governor Stevens, with

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[5] A. J. Partoll, "The Flathead Indian Treaty Council of 1855," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, XXIX (1938), 283.

[6] F. H. Woody, "A Sketch of the Early History of Western Montana," in Historical Society of Montana, Contributions, II, 94.

several officers of the Indian Department and Father Hoecken of the St. Ignatius mission, met with Victor, chief of the Salish, Alexander, chief of the Kalispel, Michelle, chief of the Kutenai, and the principal men of all three tribes at Council Grove, about six miles west of present Missoula. After a great deal of negotiation, explanation, and argument, during which Alexander and Michelle agreed to accept a reservation in the Lower Flathead but Victor insisted on a reservation in the Bitterroot, a compromise was reached and the treaty signed, July 16.[7]

The compromise, embodied in the eleventh article, provided that Bitterroot Valley above Lolo Fork was to be examined and if, in the opinion of the President, this area was best adapted to the Salish, such portions of it as necessary would be set aside for them and they would not have to go to the reservation to be established in the Lower Flathead. It is doubtful if Victor and his tribe understood the conditional nature of this article, which allowed them to remain in the Bitterroot only as long as the government did not require them to move.

Other articles provided that the three tribes were to constitute a nation, under the name of the Flathead Nation, with Victor as head chief. The Nation agreed to

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[7]Partoll, "The Flathead Indian Treaty Council," pp. 184-203.

cede to the United States all of their old range in northwestern Montana except the portions to be set aside as reservations. The boundaries of the reservation in the Lower Flathead were to be the summits of the mountain ranges which border the valley on the east, south, and west, and a straight line east and west half way between the extremities of Flathead Lake. No white men except employees of the Indian Service were to be permitted within this area without permission from the Indians. The Indians agreed to move within one year and would be paid for improvements on lands now occupied. For its part, the United States agreed to pay the Indians a total of $120,000 in installments over a period of twenty years. An agent would live among them, an agricultural and industrial school, blacksmith, carpenter, wagon and plowmaking shops, saw and flour mills, and a hospital would be established, and they would be instructed in farming and the trades. They would be supplied with the means to start farms, such as clothing, tools, and cooking utensils, and each year for twenty years additional goods would be given. Other provisions promised respect for tribal laws and salaries and houses for the chiefs.[8]

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[8]C. J. Kappler, compiler and editor, Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, II, 722-25.

To implement the treaty, the Jesuits at St. Ignatius were instructed to carry out those clauses relating to the instruction of the Indians in the various arts, and Dr. R. H. Lansdale of Oregon was appointed the first Flathead Indian Agent. Both because the government's policy of settling and civilizing the Indians appeared to coincide with their efforts in that direction and because they hoped for, and were entitled to, financial reimbursement for their work, the Jesuits immediately began carrying out their instructions. In the spring of 1856 they began encouraging the Indians to take up farming, gave them seeds and lent them plows, tools, and oxen. Lansdale arrived and they gave him every assistance they could. By 1857 the Jesuits were teaching the Indians how to cultivate, repairing their guns, axes, and knives, helping them build houses, milling their grain, and taking care of their sick. Because government aid was not immediately forthcoming, little could be done in the way of education and a school which opened in 1856 soon closed.[9]

Agent Lansdale established the Agency near the mouth of the Jocko, where he built several log cabins.[10]

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[9]DeSmet, op. cit., pp. 314-15.

[10]Woody, op. cit., p. 94.

He did not stay to help the Indians but in April, 1856, left for Salt Lake City. In June he returned with two white men, one of whom, Henry G. Miller, was accompanied by his wife. Mrs. Miller was the first white woman to come into this part of the country and the Indians were astonished and amused to see her ride a horse sideways.[11]

Miller and his wife stayed at the Agency for several years, but soon after bringing them there Lansdale left, to return only temporarily next year. John Owen had been appointed Special Indian Agent, probably to relieve the regular agent of the burden of supervising the Salish in the Bitterroot, and when Lansdale left, he assumed charge of Indian affairs in both valleys. In January, 1857, Owen made a trip from Fort Owen to the Agency, which he found in miserable condition. The cabins, with only thatched roofs, had to be repaired before Miller and his wife could stay there the rest of the winter. Owen also had to begin issuing small rations of beef to a few destitute Kutenai who had come to the Agency for aid.[12]

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[11] J. Owen, The Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, transcribed and edited by S. Dunbar and P. C. Phillips, I, 122-23. Woody wrote that in 1854 a Mrs. J. Brown came from the East with a baby and two little girls and visited at Fort Connah for several days before going on west. See Woody, op. cit., p. 94. Mrs. Miller was the first white woman to reside in the Lower Flathead for any considerable time.

[12] Owen, op. cit., I, 154-55.

A few months later, Owen again went to the Agency. After talking things over with Miller, he decided to move the Agency to his fort because the employees refused to stay in Jocko Valley any longer. On July 19, Lansdale returned and together they closed the Agency, auctioning off the public property to a crowd of half-breeds and whites.[13] Until 1860, Fort Owen was the agency headquarters from which subsistence was issued to the Indians, and Owen handled all the Indian affairs as Special Agent.

The Stevens' Treaty was not ratified by Congress until March 29, 1860, but, during the delay, Owen endeavored as well as he could to carry out its provisions. In 1859 he appointed, subject to his superiors' approval, H. M. Chase as local agent to take care of the Kalispel and Kutenai in the Lower Flathead. The same year he warned Father Menetrey to cease trying to influence the Indians against the government and to stop interfering with the traders and stockmen who were in the valley.[14]

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[13] Ibid., I, 171-73.

[14] Ibid., II, 195-97. The traders were those at Fort Connah; the stockmen were Mr. Van Etten and Louis Brown who wintered in Jocko Valley with Owen's permission. Woody indicates that in 1856 an unusually large number of traders came to western Montana, among them Van Etten, a Mormon trader who was accompanied by George Goodwin, Bill Madison, James Brown, and F. W. Woody. These men, and probably others, bought worn-out stock from emigrants going to Oregon, drove their herds north to fatten in Jocko Valley,

In March, 1860, Owen, with two farmers and a wheelwright, went to Jocko Valley to select a place to build a mill, open a farm, and erect permanent Agency buildings. A site near the southeastern end of the reservation near a small falls in the Jocko River was chosen. Before the year was over, a storehouse, blacksmith and millwright shops, and two houses had been built and a small farm put under cultivation. When machinery became available, saw and grist mills were added. N. W. Tipton, a farmer, and Mr. Calkins, a wheelwright, were hired, and Dr. Mullan, brother of Lt. John Mullan who was building the famous Mullan Road in western Montana, was engaged as resident physician for the Agency.[15]

After the Stevens' Treaty had been approved, steps were taken to make the first annuity payment, which had been pending for nearly five years. Owen asked that tools, plows, wagons, machinery for the mills, and good blooded stock be sent so that the Indians would be helped in establishing themselves on farms. The Indian department

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and then traded or resold them to other emigrants. They also traded cattle to the Indians for horses. See Woody, op. cit., pp. 93, 95. The stock thus brought into the Lower Flathead must have been one source of the later herds which were raised both on and off of the reservation by the Indians and whites.

[15]Owen, op. cit., I, 224; II, 201, 217.

had different notions of what was needed to civilize the Indians and ordered $25,000 worth of hard bread, sugar, coffee, rice, shawls, flannel, and other nearly useless goods to be sent to the reservation. Owen vehemently protested this action but to no avail.[16] The goods were sent, but delay attended their coming. When they arrived at Fort Benton, Agent A. J. Vaughn of the Blackfeet Agency refused to turn them over to the men whom Owen had sent to bring them to Fort Owen. The Indians, knowing that the goods were on their way, and anxious to receive some token of fulfillment of the government's promises, were so impatient with the delay that Owen had to use his own funds to again send men to bring the goods from Fort Benton. Finally, in November the goods arrived and Owen began issuing them to the Indians from his Fort. It was not a happy experience, though, for either the Indians or Major Owen, because the coffee was moldy, the cloth flimsy, and there was nothing that would aid in civilizing the Indians.[17]

After the arrival of the first annuity goods, the Indians were no better off than they had been before. In November, 1861, Mr. Tipton, who had been in charge at the Agency, resigned, and Owen had to hire a new man. A. P.

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[16] Ibid., II, 209-211.

[17] Ibid., II, 220-21, 228-31.

Fox, to replace him. The construction of the Mullan road and the building work at the Agency attracted a large number of men to western Montana and Owen was able to hire additional employees.[18] However, funds were not forthcoming from the government and the crops had to be pledged to pay them. The failure of long overdue appropriations to arrive so embarrassed Owen that in July, 1862, he resigned the position which had cost him much trouble and money to fill.[19]

Charles Hutchins was the next Indian Agent, arriving at the Agency in November, 1862, and serving until 1865.

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[18] Woody, op. cit., pp. 98, 100. This writer states that a large number of men were employed in building the Agency and a large amount of money was put in circulation, "making times lively generally." Among those whom Owen hired were A. B. Henderson, Mr. Higgins, Gibson, F. M. Green, T. H. Harris, Hibbard, Williams, and three destitute miners from Salmon River. See also Owen, op. cit., I, 231, 233, 236, 251, 258; II, 273.

[19] Ibid., II, 273-280. Owen has been accused of neglecting Indian affairs in favor of his trading business. See M. G. Burlingame, The Montana Frontier, p. 34. This author wrote that Owen's interests were with his trading post rather than the Agency and reservation. From the record, it would appear that Owen was more concerned and worked harder with Indian affairs than many of the regular agents who should have had little else to distract them. Owen's work has been little known because his annual reports were not published as were those of the other Indian Agents. For this reason, he refused to submit further reports after 1860. See Owen, op. cit., II, 264. His letters and day-to-day journals provide a picture of the situation from 1857 to 1862 which is not otherwise available.

During his administration, little was done for the Indians except by the Jesuits. By 1863, the mission had attained a degree of prosperity[20] and, with the aid of a government subsidy of $1800 in that year, was able to open a boys' day school. This school was unsuccessful because the students could not be kept away from the influence of their families. It was later reorganized as a boarding school. In 1864 several members of the Sisters of Providence were brought to the mission and a boarding school for girls was opened, supported partly by charity. No further government aid was forthcoming between 1864 and 1874 and only slow progress was made in the field of education. More boarders and larger buildings were gradually added over the years and by 1871 the schools were operating fairly successfully.[21] In that year, Colonel Wheeler, of a U. S. Geo-

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[20]Palladino, op. cit., p. 104. This degree of prosperity was no doubt partly due to the prices charged for goods and services to the whites. On July 15, 1857, Owen records that he bought wheat from the mission at $5 per bushel. On February 4, 1861, he wrote to Father Menetrey that the prices charged for vegetables--50¢ per head of cabbage--were exhorbitant. He wrote again to Father Menetrey on December 6, 1861: "The prices charged by the Mission for Articles furnished the Jocko Reservation are in My opinion So Exhorbitantly high that I have to request that they will furnish Nothing more in the future unless upon my written order." See Owen, op. cit., I, 172; II, 240, 273.

[21]Palladino, op. cit., pp. 104, 145-46, 158.

logical Survey party, wrote concerning the girls' school:

> The residence and school house... [is] exceedingly neat, airy, and comfortable. The most interesting part of our visit was the examination of the children in their studies. There are seventeen Indians and three white girls... all dressed alike in neat calico, faces clean, hair smooth, and eyes bright.... They acquitted themselves very creditably in spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic... [and] the penmanship of some would do credit to any young lady.

About other aspects of the Jesuits' work, Colonel Wheeler wrote:

> We were surprised at the extent of the farming operations carried on. All the grain and corn, potatoes and other vegetables, cattle and horses, butter and cheese needed for several hundred people are produced here by the labor of the Indians under the superintendence of the brothers. The mission...is entirely self-sustaining.[22]

In 1874 the mission began receiving a regular contract subsidy for education. For each of the next four years $2100 were allowed. This was increased to $4000 per year in 1878 and, beginning in 1890, the allowance was made on a fairly liberal per student basis.[23]

While the Jesuits were doing what they could for the Indians, the Indian agents were also endeavoring to carry out the government's promises, but with indifferent

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[22]"Statement of Colonel Wheeler," in Hayden, op. cit., II, 251-52.

[23]Palladino, op. cit., p. 159.

success. The Agency saw and grist mills burned in 1869 and were not replaced for nearly four years. Progress in settling the Indians on farms was slow. More than ten years after the establishment of the reservation, Agent Chapman, who had replaced Hutchins in 1865, could report that only 830 acres were cultivated by the three tribes and that they depended to a great extent upon the bison for subsistence.[24] Agent Chapman was replaced by John W. Wells late in 1866 but the latter stayed only a short time at the Agency. During his absence and until his successor arrived, Washington J. McCormick, a prominent Montana lawyer, acted as Special Agent.

From 1868 until 1877 seven different men held the position of Flathead Indian Agent.[25] Under such conditions, the agents could hardly have the time or opportunity to learn of the problems and needs of the Indians, let alone do much about them. It is not surprising that

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[24]A. H. Chapman, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866," in Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior (1866), pp. 315-16.

[25]The list of agents is as follows: M. M. McCauley (1868), A. S. Galbreath (1868-69), G. E. Ford (1870), C. S. Jones (1870-72), D. Shanahan (1873-74), P. Whaley (1874-75), and C. Medary (1875-77). See Owen, op. cit., I, 111, 138, 155, passim; II, 19, 70, 127, 141n, passim, and "List of Flathead Indian Agents," in Historical Society of Montana, Contributions, I, 291.

development was slow and erratic.[26] Nevertheless, when viewed over the years, the improvements were significant.

By 1871, a total of nearly 1,900 Indians, including 567 Salish in the Bitterroot, cultivated 105 farms averaging about thirteen acres apiece. Though five thousand bushels of wheat, 1,650 bushels of potatoes, and 160 bushels of corn were raised, some of the Indians had to be given subsistence during the winter. The Kalispels cultivated seventy of the 105 farms while the Salish cultivated thirty-five. As for the Kutenai along the west shore of Flathead Lake, they had nothing, and the agent characterized them as "idle, thriftless, improvident, and dishonest."[27]

At this time, in 1871, few of the Salish had left the Bitterroot for the Flathead Reservation. Under the terms of the Stevens' Treaty, they were to be allowed to stay in their traditional home until it had been surveyed

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[26]While it would be grossly unfair to charge this slow development to defects in the character of all the Indian Agents, it is possible that some of them were not completely honest. Father Palladino makes the accusation that the sum of $1,600.66 was charged against reservation accounts for four bolts of cloth while on at least one occasion flour belonging to the Agency was sold in Deer Lodge. See Palladino, op. cit., pp. 172, 174. Palladino was not an impartial observer and his charges may have had little validity.

[27]C. J. Jones, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1871," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of Interior (1871), pp. 425-26.

and the President had decided that the reservation was better suited to their needs. Since the survey had never been made, the Salish, under Victor and later, Charlot, assumed that they were confirmed in their possession of Bitterroot Valley above the Lolo. As early as 1860, John Owen had urged the necessity of establishing a reservation in the Bitterroot for the Salish to protect them from the encroachments of the whites, but no action had been taken.[28] During the decade of the '60's, more and more whites came into the valley, so that by 1871 nearly a thousand were settled there. Though a few of the Indians were settled on farms, the majority of them lived as they always had. Friction soon developed between the two races, and the whites, in memorials to Congress, began urging the Indians' removal.[29]

The territorial delegate to Congress, William A. Claggett, actively pressed the settlers' cause, as did J. A. Viall, Superintendent of Indians for Montana, and C. S. Jones, Flathead Indian Agent. Viall and Jones falsely reported in 1871 that there were only about one hundred and fifty Indians and but three good Indian farms in the

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[28] Owen, op. cit., II, 215-16.

[29] "Joint Memorial to Congress Praying for the Removal of the Flatheads," Montana Territorial Legislative Assembly, Laws, Memorials, and Resolutions of the Territory of Montana (5th sess., 1868-69, Helena, 1869), pp. 119-20.

Bitterroot, and that the Indians themselves understood that the President had the right to decide upon their removal at any time.[30] Under this pressure, President Grant, on November 14, 1871, issued an executive order which stated that since the Bitterroot had been carefully surveyed and examined and had proven less adapted to the wants of the Salish tribe than the general reserve, it was unnecessary to set aside a separate home for them. Therefore, all Indians in the Bitterroot, except those who wished to remain on their farms, were to move to the general reservation as soon as possible.[31]

Congress passed a bill providing that $5000 be appropriated for the expenses of the removal and that $50,000 in annuities be granted for improvements left behind in the Bitterroot. James A. Garfield was sent to persuade the Indians to accept the terms. On August 22, 1872, Garfield, Viall, Claggett, and several other officials met with Charlot, first chief, Arlee, second chief, Adolf, third chief, and the other principal men of the tribe at

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[30] J. A. Viall, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Montana, "Annual Report, 1871," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1871), p. 413.

[31] "Executive Orders Relating to Indian Reserves," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1886), p. 336.

their camp in the Bitterroot. The council lasted until the 26th, moving to the Jocko Valley near present Arlee on the 24th. The chiefs set forth their arguments and while insisting on their right to remain in the Bitterroot, disclaimed any hostile intention. On the third day of the negotiations it became evident that the chiefs had become divided in opinion and, to take advantage of the situation, Garfield drew up a contract which he thought would be acceptable. Arlee and Adolf signed the contract but Charlot refused to do so. The second and third chiefs expressed the opinion that if the government carried out the terms of the agreement, Charlot would finally consent to the arrangements.

According to the terms of the contract, the removal from the Bitterroot was to be made as soon as the government had fulfilled its promises as set forth in the contract. The chiefs were to select twenty farm sites, which the government was to fence and plow and on which twenty comfortable cabins were to be built. The Indians were to be furnished with sufficient grain for the first year and the money appropriated for their removal was to be paid directly to them. Garfield thought that the Indians entertained a deep mistrust of the promises of the government and, to gain their confidence, he ordered that work begin immediately

on the twenty cabins.[32]

That the Indians had good reason to be wary of promises is evident from the report of the Indian Agent in 1873. When Daniel Shanahan took over the job from Agent Jones early in that year, conditions at the Agency were extremely bad. The work cattle were worthless and not expected to survive the winter, there was only one serviceable wagon, no serviceable plow, and the harrow consisted of a few pieces of iron driven through some bars of rotten wood. The buildings were dilapitated, "everything wore an air of gloom and decay [,] and ...the Indians appeared to have no confidence in any statements made to them." Of the twenty houses ordered built by General Garfield, none were finished. No lumber had yet been cut for that purpose and the Salish were using this fact for noncompliance with the terms of the contract. However, though Charlot was unyielding in his refusal to move, Arlee and Adolf promised to do so soon. Agent Shanahan recommended that Arlee be made head chief to replace Charlot, who should forfeit his position.[33]

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[32] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1872), pp. 109-118.

[33] D. Shanahan, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1873," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1873), pp. 249-50.

During his year at the Agency, Shanahan brought about some improvement. The agent who relieved him in 1874 was able to report that the Agency buildings were in fair condition and the twenty Indian houses were completed. The new agent, Peter Whaley, reported further that the one great need of the Indians was agricultural implements. Most of them were inclined to agriculture and those who received plows and harness at the last annuity distribution were pleased, while those who had received blankets were discouraged. Especially among the Kutenai were conditions deplorable. Living on Dayton Creek near the northern boundary of the reservation, about sixty miles from the Agency, they were too far away to receive much aid. Having no agricultural implements, they had to hunt for a living, but that source of livelihood was rapidly diminishing because of the encroachments of whites. As for the Salish, only five families, including Arlee, had moved to the reservation and were cultivating two farms near the Agency. To induce more Indians to leave the Bitterroot and better to serve all the Indians, it was recommended that the Agency be moved from the southern end of the reserve to a more central place where the soil was better.[34]

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[34]P. Whaley, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1874," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1874), pp. 262-63.

In 1877 Peter Ronan became Flathead Indian Agent, a position he held for nearly twenty years. Since the establishment of the reservation, the condition of the Indians had gradually improved and the development of the reservation was well advanced. In 1879 the Indians were cultivating 3,460 acres, they raised more than 20,000 bushels of wheat in addition to other grains and vegetables, owned 9,335 horses and 5,785 cattle, and only twenty lived by hunting. The reservation was dotted with Indian farms and habitations and even the Kutenai were starting to settle down to cultivate the soil. In 1878 a boarding and industrial school for boys had been established under the management of the missionaries and the average school attendance was fifty.[35]

Agent Ronan believed that religion and education were the only means of civilizing the Indians and frequently urged the necessity of helping the Jesuits in their efforts. At the mission schools the boys were taught painting, blacksmithing, farming, carpentry, and milling, while the girls learned cooking, sewing, gardening, and housekeeping. In 1882 the government spent a total of $4,000 to support the two schools but the religious society

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[35] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1879), pp. 253, 254-55; P. Ronan, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1879," in ibid., pp. 94-95.

still bore the heaviest burden, spending $9,700.[36]

Just as it appeared that the Indians were getting well established on the reservation and that the government's promises to them were being fulfilled, an event took place which was to result in time in partial displacement of the Indians from their lands and in a more rapid and complete development of resources of Lower Flathead Valley. This event was the coming of the railroad.

The Northern Pacific Railroad, following the Stevens' route through the Rockies, was approaching western Montana in 1882. Since part of the route ran through the southern portion of the Flathead Indian Reservation, it was necessary for the company to induce the Indians to give up a right-of-way. Most of the Indians were opposed to the railroad, regarding it with remarkable foresight as "fatal to their interests and the sure precursor to the abandonment of their homes and lands to the whites." Agent Ronan shared their fears, believing that the advancing settlers who were being drawn into northwestern Montana by the proposed railroad were looking with covetous eyes on the Indian lands.[37]

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[36] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1882), p. 315.

[37] P. Ronan, "Annual Report, 1882," in ibid., p. 103.

In spite of the objections of the Indians and their agent, the railroad company secured the right-of-way. On September 2, 1882, an agreement was reached with Assistant Attorney-General McCannon whereby the confederated tribes agreed tc surrender all title to a strip of land two hundred feet wide through the reservation for the right-of-way and an additional 130 acres for depot purposes. The United States was to pay to the confederated tribes $16,000 for the land and $7,625 to individual Indians for improvements on certain portions of it.[38]

With this agreement and the events which followed, the isolation of the Lower Flathead was broken forever and the development of the area began in earnest.

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[38] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1883), pp. 19-20.

CHAPTER V

STOCK RAISING, 1855-1948

Before 1883, practically all of the development which took place in the Lower Flathead was confined within the boundaries of the reservation, and was the result of the activities of the Indians under the guidance of the agents and missionaries. After that date, the area north of the reservation, and especially the west lake shore, began to grow in importance as stock raising became established in the grassy valleys among the scattered mountains of the Flathead Range, and at the head of the lake.

Stock raising had first begun on the reservation in the late 1850's when several traders bought worn-out cattle from emigrants going to Oregon, drove them to fatten in Jocko Valley, and later resold them to other emigrants. Some of these cattle were traded to the Indians for horses and thus became one of the sources of later herds on the reservation.[1]

Over the years, the industry gradually grew and became concentrated in the hands of a few half-breeds and

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[1]See note 14, page 68. The Jesuits brought in a few head of stock in 1854 and probably later, but these were largely for their own use. They were perhaps used for breeding purposes and s o helped to increase the Indians' herds.

whites who claimed Indian rights through their Indian wives. In the '60's and '70's, Angus McDonald, largely on the strength of a verbal lease from the Indians to the lands around Fort Connah, maintained a residence and raised cattle in the vicinity of the post. Other men, some of whom were former employees of Hudson's Bay Company or had been free traders, and including Peter Irvine, his son, William, Dave Cachure, Charles Allard, and Michael Pablo, also ranged herds on reservation lands not occupied by the Indians.[2]

By 1889, stock raising had become nearly as important as agriculture on the reservation; the horses and cattle ranged in that year numbered 5,782 and 12,250 head respectively.[3] Most of the livestock was held by a few owners, such as Pablo and Allard, who amassed considerable wealth in their operations. In 1894 more than $40,000

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[2]A. J. Partoll, "Angus McDonald, Frontier Fur Trader," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, XLII (April 1, 1951), 140-45; Historical Society of Montana, Contributions, I, 305; J. F. McAlear, "William Irvine, Stockman," S. E. Johns, Collection, I, 123-25; O. W. Johnson, editor, The Story of the Tobacco Plains Country, p. 29. Others engaged in stock raising in the 1880's and '90's were Mike Matte, Art Larrivie, T. G. Demers, Allen Sloan, Joe and Angus McDonald, L. J. Marion, Baptiste Jett, Louis and Mat Couture, Alex and Joseph Couture, Andrew Stinger, and Frank Jette. See Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1903), Part I, p. 59.

[3]Annual Report of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of Interior (1889), pp. 522-23.

worth of beef cattle were shipped to Chicago, and the next year there were approximately 20,000 head each of horses and cattle on reservation ranges. The cattle were of good breed, having been improved over the years with thoroughbred Holstein and Poled Angus bulls. The horses were of the cayuse breed, small and of little value. Because of the mild winters and the abundance of grass, stock was run on the range the year around with little supplemental feeding, but as the number of horses increased, there was danger that cattle raising would have to be curtailed.[4]

The first attempts to range cattle north of the reservation were made between 1865 and 1870 when Angus McDonald, Joe Ashley, Irvine (Peter?), and Michquam Finley ran a small herd at the head of the lake. They stayed there only a year or two and then were forced to leave because of danger from roving Blackfeet.[5] The next attempt was made in 1871 when Joseph Marion, Gaspard Deschamps,

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[4] J. T. Carter, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1895," in Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior (1895), II, 186, 191; J. T. Carter, "Annual Report, 1897," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1897), p. 167.

[5] "Letter from Duncan McDonald," in Johns, Collection, I, 35-36. These men were probably all half-breeds. Angus McDonald was probably one of the sons of the Angus who had been in charge of Fort Connah and who, in 1865-70, was at Fort Colville. The Irvine was probably Peter or his son, William.

Louis Brown, Harry Burney, Francis Grevelle, and John Cunningham, stockmen from the Bitterroot, wintered in the same area. The next spring, Marion, Deschamps, and Brown returned to Frenchtown because conditions did not look good for cattle, but the other men stayed on for several years.[6]

Other whites, unable to graze their cattle in the valleys of the reservation, ranged their herds immediately north of the reservation line in the Dayton area, and, in 1874, became involved with the Kutenai over the ownership of a large tract of meadow which produced two or three hundred tons of wild hay. The dispute was settled when both parties joined to cut the crop, but this was only the beginning of the encroachment of white stockmen on lands that the Indians claimed.[7]

Between 1878 and 1880, there were a few more attempts to establish herds around the head of the lake. Henry Rimeau, Cassimer, Baptiste LeBeau, John Leary, Thomas Lynch, two McGoverns, and two Raymonds, former placer miners, took up cattle raising in the vicinity of present Somers. The McGoverns located their ranch where Somers was later built. Within several years there were 1,500 cattle

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[6]"Statement of Andrew W. Swaney," in ibid., I, 7-15.

[7]Whaley, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1874," op. cit., p. 263.

ranging from the lake northward into the Upper Flathead.[8] A year or two later, perhaps in anticipation of the coming of the Northern Pacific through western Montana and realizing that stock raising was the only occupation which could offer any profit in the lands west of the lake, John Herman, Joseph Marion, and Hubbart began running cattle west of Hog Heaven Hill in northern Little Bitterroot Valley. Clarence Cromwell, for whom Cromwell Island was named, established a herd in Dayton Creek valley.[9]

With the completion of the Northern Pacific through western Montana in 1883, many prospective settlers came into the Flathead area. Because of the restrictions on settlement imposed by the reservation, a large number of them went northward into the Upper Flathead and a few settled along the lake shore north of the Indian lands. Most of their names are lost to history, but it is probable that they took up cattle and sheep raising, and did only a little farming. The nature of the terrain and the long distance to markets prohibited any other occupation.

By the late 1880's, the available range north of the reservation became crowded as most of the pastures in

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[8]Johns, Collection, IX, 43.

[9]"Statement of Tyson D. Duncan," Johns, Collection, I, 16-23.

the Upper Flathead were converted to agricultural purposes. The stockmen were squeezed between the advancing farms and the reservation and, to maintain themselves they began ranging their herds on lands claimed by the Indians.

When the reservation was established, the Indians had believed that its northern boundary was a range of hills north and east of Dayton Creek and that they were entitled to settle on the large hay meadows along that stream. On the strength of this belief, ninteen Kutenai had taken up farms in the area in the 1870's. About 1882, a white, probably Clarence Cromwell, had ranged cattle there but was soon forced out by the Indians. The whites claimed that the meadows were outside of the reservation and open to settlement under the homestead and preemption laws. In 1883, the Surveyor-General of Montana Territory ordered the boundary surveyed to determine its exact status. The survey showed that the disputed area was not reservation land. The Kutenai protested the right of the territorial government to make the survey, believing, no doubt, that it was faulty, and, in 1887, it was resurveyed by U. S. Deputy Surveyor Harrison upon instructions of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. It was found that the disputed lands were outside of the reservation. Agent Ronan tried without success to have the boundary moved a few miles north so that the Indians would not be deprived of their

lands.[10] He did succeed in getting some of the lands allotted to the Indians, but because the Kutenai were not yet much addicted to farming or stock-raising, they did not hold them. Though they retained title to them until 1905, long before this they were taken over by stockmen who were looking for more pasture lands.[11]

After 1887, the encroachments of the stockmen became serious. They were repeatedly driven off the Indian lands by Indian police but by 1897 had become so troublesome that the Indian agent recommended that the northern boundary be fenced and the "squaw-men" driven out.[12] Because of the press of settlement from the north, between 1898 and 1901 efforts were made to induce the Indians to give up the northern quarter of their reserve. Though the Indian agent supported the cession because the only inhabitants were a few Kutenai and white "squaw-men," these whites, the stockmen, secured the defeat of the proposal

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[10] P. Ronan, "Annual Report, 1887," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1887), pp. 138-39; Ibid. (1891), p. 127.

[11] "Letter of W. H. Smead to the Board of Indian Commissioners," in Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1899), Part II, p. 255; Ibid. (1903), Part I, p. 42; Ibid. (1906), Part I, p. 71.

[12] J. T. Carter, "Annual Report, 1897," op. cit., p. 168.

through their Indian relatives.[13]

The triumph of the stockmen was shortlived, however, for the era of range cattle and sheep rapidly drew to a close. About 1900, the government, through the issuance of grazing permits, made it possible for cattle to be legally grazed on the reservation. In 1901, only two herds, totaling six hundred head and owned by John Herman and the Hubbart & Cromwell Cattle Company, took advantage of the privilege. In 1903, the number of cattle admitted increased to 1698, owned by Herman and the Hubbart Cattle Company.[14] This increase merely reflected the march of settlement southward from the Upper Flathead and the consequent shrinkage of the open range. On the reservation, the large numbers of horses gradually destroyed the range and as early as 1895, William Irvine had trailed six hundred cattle to Canada to winter because of lack of grass.[15] Sale of about thirteen thousand horses between 1903 and

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[13]W. D. Smead, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1898," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1898), p. 191; "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1901," in Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1901), Part I, p. 49.

[14]Ibid.(1901), Part I, p. 59.

[15]J. F. McAlear, "William Irvine, Stockman," in Johns, Collection, I, pp. 124-25.

1906 brought some relief, but instead of growing, the cattle industry continued to decline. A further reduction of the range took place after 1904 when the Indians took up and fenced their allotments in preparation for the opening of the reservation. This, combined with a prevailing low price for beef, brought a virtual end to the cattle industry as it has heretofore been carried on. Herds on and off the reservation were cut as much as 50% in 1906 as the owners disposed of their cattle. As many as five thousand head were driven to Canada from the reservation alone.[16] The sheep industry declined also, though not as drastically as the cattle business. Sheep were ranged in small flocks by many owners, most of whom maintained their operations.

Later, stock raising revived, but on a different basis. After 1916, dairying and feeding good grade beef cattle became one of the most important industries in the Lower Flathead, particularly in Mission and Jocko valleys. This revival was brought about by the fact that more and more acreage was withdrawn from cropping and devoted to pasturage or the production of hay. By 1948, more than

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[16]Carter, "Annual Report, 1895," in Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1895), II, 190; S. Bellew, Flathead Indian Agent, "Annual Report, 1906," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1906), p. 256.

1,100 farmers milked cows and about one-fifth of them derived the major portion of their income from dairy products. Small beef herds were kept on almost every farm. The sheepmen turned to feeding registered purebred animals, especially the Columbia breed, which produces more wool and mutton than any other. In 1940, more than twenty-seven thousand sheep were kept on about one hundred and fifty farms. As the quality of the stock was improved, and the quantity of feed made available by irrigation increased, the stock raising industry became more stable and a more important source of income.[17]

An interesting sidelight of the stock raising activities on the reservation was the start of a bison herd in Mission Valley. It is uncertain who brought the first bison to the Lower Flathead, but whatever the details, several young animals were captured on the plains and brought to graze near St. Ignatius in the 1870's.[18] These animals

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[17]Sundborg, op. cit., pp. 41-3; Supervisors of the Lake County Soil Conservation District, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[18]Peter Ronan wrote that at his suggestion, an Indian captured two cows and a bull near Fort Shaw in 1878, and that in 1888 the herd (then owned by Pablo and Allard) numbered twenty-seven head. See Ronan, "Annual Report, 1888," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1888), pp. 157-58. Another writer indicated that in 1873 Walking Coyote, a Kalispel, brought two bulls and two cows to St. Ignatius by packhorse. See R. S. Norton, U. S. Game Management Agent, "American Bison Preserve is Show Place," in Ronan Pioneer (Ronan, Montana), April 21, 1938.

multiplied rapidly and in the '80's, twelve of them were acquired by Michael Pablo and Charles Allard from the original owner for $2,500. A few years later, Pablo bought out Allard's interest in the rapidly increasing herd, and in 1904 he owned more than two hundred head. In 1901, C. E. Conrad purchased part of the herd and a few years later the Canadian government acquired most of the remainder.[19]

In 1905, a national movement for the preservation of the bison culminated in the organization of the American Bison Society, which spearheaded a movement for the establishment of a bison range in Montana under federal supervision. The support of President Roosevelt and several members of Congress was enlisted and, in 1908, provision was made in an Agricultural Appropriation Bill for the establishment of the range on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Within two years, $50,700 had been appropriated for the project and 18,540 acres north of the mouth of Jocko River had been purchased from the Indians and fenced.

The American Bison Society, which was to furnish the animals, raised $10,560 by popular subscription. Thirty-four bison were bought from the Conrad estate and six others

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[19] Ibid., Flathead Courier (Polson, Montana), June 9, 1910; August 18, 1910; December 23, 1910.

were donated by Mrs. Conrad, Charles Goodnight of Texas, and the Blue Mountain Forest Association of New Hampshire. These forty animals increased rapidly until, in 1927, the herd numbered 640 head. The bison, along with a number of elk, Rocky Mountain big-horn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and antelope, were maintained with a minimum of winter feeding. The antelope died out but the other animals increased so that their numbers had to be periodically reduced to keep them within the carrying capacity of the range. Excess animals are now usually disposed of alive, the bulk of them being liberated in depleted natural game ranges for the benefit of the Indians. A few of the bison are butchered and the meat sold for food.[20] Perhaps credit should be given to an unknown Indian and two half-breed stockmen, who hoped to raise bison for meat, for helping to preserve one of the symbols of the frontier for future generations.

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[20] Ronan Pioneer, April 21, 1938; C. C. Wright, Superintendent of the Flathead Indian Reservation, General Information about the Flathead Indian Reservation, p. 1.

CHAPTER VI

LAND AND LAKE TRANSPORTATION

One of the first requirements for the full development of any region is a satisfactory transportation system. In the Lower Flathead, the establishment of such a system was long delayed.

The first transportation routes in the area were the trails and wagon roads which resulted from hauling goods by horseback or wagon to Fort Connah, the mission, and the Agency. When the Agency was well established and annuity goods had been distributed for a number of years, other roads resulted from hauling the tools, agricultural implements, and other goods to the scattered Indian farms. By 1880, most of the routes of the later system had been marked out in this manner. The main road was one running from the Agency to present Polson along practically the same route that the present paved highway follows. Northward from Polson, it went over the lowest hills west of the lake to Dayton.

The rapid settlement of the area north of the reservation, and particularly of the Upper Flathead, during the '80's made it imperative that means be found to connect this area with markets and sources of supply. Until the

Great Northern Railroad was completed through the Upper Flathead in the '90's, the closest rail connection was the Northern Pacific station at Ravalli. South of the lake the terrain presented few problems for travelers and the road between Polson and Ravalli was adequate except in wet weather. Northward from Polson, however, the Mission Range made it very difficult to go along the east lake shore, while on the west, high hills barred the path in a number of places above Dayton.

As early as 1864, perhaps in anticipation of a large amount of traffic to the Kootenai mines, the first Territorial Legislative Assembly of Montana had granted a charter to the Bitterroot and Kootenay Wagon Road and Ferry Company to provide transporation facilities between the Bitterroot and Kootenai valleys by way of the west shore of Flathead Lake. The company was given the right to build a toll road from St. Ignatius mission to the Kootenai area and the exclusive privilege for ten years of maintaining a ferry across Flathead Lake or river at any point within fifteen miles above or below the outlet of the lake.[1] It is unlikely that anything was ever done by the company because the heavy traffic did not develop, and in spite of the

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[1] "Act to Incorporate the Bitter Root and Kootenay Wagon Road and Ferry Company," Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials of the Territory of Montana (1864), pp. 564-65.

company's monopoly of ferry privileges, for many years after 1864, a crude ferry operated by Baptiste Eneas, a half-breed, provided the only means for crossing the outlet of the lake.[2] The first settlers going north from Dayton had to make their own road over the hills, but the hardships of this route soon led to the development of an easier and faster kind of transportation.

Flathead Lake was a highway connecting the two valleys lying at its ends. As the Upper Flathead became settled and because roads were so poor, it was natural that its waters would be used for transporting passengers and goods around the mountain barriers on its shores.

Just who built the first boat to carry passengers and freight on the lake is a matter of conjecture, but the credit probably goes to Neil and George Nelson and Fred Lindgren, who, in 1883 or 1884, built a twenty ton sailboat near present Polson. This boat, the Swan, ran from the Polson landing to Dooley's landing, a few miles up Flathead River, sometimes taking as much as a week for the trip. There was much trouble from calms and the river current so in 1885 the boat was sold to Captain Kerr, who installed a steam engine and renamed it the U. S.

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[2] C. W. Buell, "The Story of Angelique Begins with Polson," in Johns, Collection, I, 89. Angelique was the daughter of Baptiste Eneas.

Grant.[3] The Grant ran between Polson and the upper river landings on a twice weekly schedule but in the fall of 1885 she lost part of her propeller on a snag in Flathead River. That winter she got new machinery and for the next several years allegedly made a great amount of money for her owner.[4]

The demand for transportation grew and, in the fall of 1886, Duncan McDonald and a Mr. Briggs launched a new boat, the Pocahontas, which had been brought in from the east. This boat, larger than the Grant, was also very profitable but in September, 1887, while trying to escape a storm by running between Melita Island and the shore, she ran aground and sank. All of the passengers got safely ashore and most of the forty tons of freight were recovered. A few months later she was raised and remodeled and, under the name of the Dora, continued to operate for a number of years. In 1890 she was converted to a freight barge.[5]

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[3]One old timer said that the Swan was built by Hugh Sinclair and Fred Lindgren in 1883, another that it was Lindgren and the Nelson brothers the same year. A later writer indicates that the boat was built by the Nelson brothers in 1884. See G. F. Stannard, "The Navigation of Flathead Waters," in Johns, Collection, IX, 98; "Statement of Andrew W. Swaney, in Johns, Collection, III, 8; B. Braumberger, Lake and River Navigation in the Flathead, p. 2.

[4]Ibid., p. 3

[5]Ibid., p. 4; Johns, Collection, VI, 4.

The next boat of importance was the Tom Carter, launched in 1889 by the firm of DePuy and Cheney at Demersville, a few miles southeast of present Kalispell, on the Flathead River. The Carter, a wide boat drawing eight feet of water, and with only six or seven inches of freeboard when loaded, made her first trip to the foot of the lake during the first week of November. On the trip down, she carried twenty passengers and on the return, 18,000 pounds of freight. She made the return trip with stops at all the river landings in less than five hours.[6] On December 20, the Carter made her last trip of the winter but by April of 1890 she was again making regular runs between Demersville and Polson. That spring, navigation was difficult because of boulders and low water, but on one trip in May she carried 30,000 lbs. of freight and twenty passengers to Demersville, the largest load ever carried on the lake up to that time.[7]

Navigation on Flathead Lake reached its climax for this particular period between 1890 and 1892 during the

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[6]Ibid., VI, 2, (Taken from the Weekly Interlake, Nov. 8, 1889.)

[7]Ibid., VI, 4. Much of the information on lake navigation which is contained in the Johns Collection was taken from the Demersville Weekly Interlake. The compiler of the Collection was not a trained historian and in most cases did not indicate the exact source of information, consequently, many of the items are not credited or dated or both.

construction of the Great Northern Railroad through the Upper Flathead. Nearly all of the construction material and many of the workers involved in building the railroad were hauled by wagon and stage from Ravalli to the foot of the lake. From there they were carried by steamboat up the lake and as far up Flathead River as the depth of the water would allow. Though a group of men organized the Missoula and Northern Pacific Railway Company to build a railroad to connect Demersville with the Northern Pacific at Dixon, and though, in 1891, the company received the grant of a right-of-way through the reservation and up either side of the lake,[8] this was only the first of many proposals to provide north and south transportation through the Lower Flathead. Nothing came of the plan and the steamboats were left to come into their own as a major means of transportation. By late in 1890, daily trips up and down the lake, necessitated by the large amount of freight and many passengers going into the Upper Flathead, were made by the Dora, the

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[8]The Missoula and Northern Pacific Railway Company was organized with a capital stock of $2,000,000 by J. M. Keith, C. H. McLeod, T. C. Marshall, and Thomas Greenough, of Missoula, and E. L. Bonner of Deer Lodge. Johns, Collection, X, 51-52. Congress granted the Company a right-of-way 150 feet wide from the mouth of the Jocko to the foot of the lake, up either side, and on to the Canadian border. The company was also given the right to use Flathead Lake for transportation purposes but all rights were lost if the road was not completed in 3 years. The rights were forfeited. Annual Report of the Commission of Indian Affairs (1891), pp. 671-72.

Grant, and the Carter, and still more facilities were needed to meet the demands.[9]

To accommodate the increased traffic, two new boats were launched, the Crescent and the State of Montana. The Crescent, a shallow draft boat designed to move the head of navigation to Columbia Falls, was launched in April, 1891, by Captain DePuy. This boat was 150 feet long, sixteen feet wide and drew sixteen inches of water. Its stern-wheel was nineteen feet in diameter, there were stables for more than ten horses, and the hold would accommodate seventy-five tons of freight. One hundred passengers could be accommodated with twelve staterooms, ladies and gentlemen's cabins, and a ten by forty foot dining room.[10] The Crescent made a trial run up Flathead River to Columbia Falls in May, and several trips there later with machinery for the Great Northern when the water was fairly high. Though it was proposed to establish a continuous water route connecting the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern, the long periods of low water, the need for continual dredging of the river, and the rapids a few miles below the lake

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[9]Johns, Collection, VI, 45.

[10]Ibid., 95, (Taken from the Weekly Interlake, April 24, 1891).

caused these plans to be abandoned.[11]

Construction of the State of Montana was started in Portland, Oregon, where the partially built hull was purchased by Captain Kerr. It was shipped to the foot of the lake early in 1891 where, during the spring, construction was completed. This stern wheeler was 150 feet long, twenty-six feet wide, and had eighteen staterooms, ladies' and mens' rooms, a bar, and a crew of twenty-five. Drawing but eighteen inches and with a speed of sixteen miles an hours, the State of Montana was designed to compete with the Crescent for the river traffic. The completion of the G. N. through the Upper Flathead killed most of the demand for river transportation and both boats were used almost exclusively on the lake.[12] A smaller freight boat, the Mary Ann, was built to handle the business of the Big Bend Grain Company. Eugene Hodge, who later operated a line of boats on the lake, was captain of this boat. In a few years it was rotting on the beach when the grain company went out of business.[13]

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[11] Ibid., VI, 100; Braumberger, op. cit., p. 6.

[12] Ibid., p. 6; Johns, Collection, VI, 61-2, 69, 110.

[13] Braumberger, op. cit., p. 7. There were probably other boats, particularly barges, operating on the lake during this period, but no record of them is available.

During cold weather the steamboats did not operate and mail, freight, and passengers were carried around the lake by wagon and stage.[14] Charles Allard ran the stage line and that the service and accommodations were none too good is testified by the complaint that:

> the drivers... manage to get into Ravalli just in time to miss the freight going east, thus compelling travellers to stay overnight in Ravalli. This is not right. To be sure the hotel and eating house at Ravalli would not make as much as when passengers are compelled to lay over but ... if Mr. Allard cares to please his customers he will see that the drivers do their duty.[15]

Another complaint stated:

> The increasing passenger travel to and from the Flathead country deserves better stage accommodations than Mr. Allard is furnishing. All classes of both men and women pass over the road and it is anything but agreeable to a refined woman, who has always been guarded from even the hint of evil, to be sandwiched in beside one of the lowest representatives of the demi monde. A recent traveller over the line remarked that the horrors of that stage ride would never be erased from her mind.[16]

Allard apparently did little to improve the services he offered; instead, he bought out a small competitor, T. M. Adams, and raised the fare from Ravalli to Polson to $4.00.

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[14] Johns, Collection, VI, 70 (Weekly Interlake, Feb. 6, 1891); "Statement of Andrew W. Swaney," in Ibid., III, 9. This writer said that the first road was around the west side of the lake and that none which could be travelled was built on the east side until 1889.

[15] Ibid., VI, 69-70 (Weekly Interlake, Jan. 30, 1891).

[16] Ibid., VI, 88 (Weekly Interlake, April 3, 1891).

Another competitor, Eugene Sears, appeared, but there was plenty of traffic for both lines, at least during 1891-2.[17]

The early part of 1891 saw the heaviest traffic yet on the stages and steamboats between Ravalli and the head of the lake. One observer reported that on a trip from Polson to Ravalli in May, 1891, he passed nearly two hundred people en route northward, and it was noted that during a five day period, in April, the Carter brought 586 passengers to the head of the lake.[18] As for freight, early in April the Northern Pacific gave notice that no more freight billed to Ravalli would be received because the freight house and platform were full to overflowing and the side tracks were blocked with cars being unloaded. It was not until near the end of the month that the roads dried out and J. D. Heyfron, employing two hundred teams, could begin hauling to Polson landing. Once the wagons got moving, the steamboats carried at least 50,000 pounds of freight, besides a constant stream of passengers, to Demersville every day.[19]

Traffic began to drop off late in 1891 as work on

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[17] Ibid., VI, 127 (Weekly Interlake, August 7, 1891); 44.

[18] Ibid., V, 92, 98 (Weekly Interlake, April 17, and May 15, 1891).

[19] Ibid., VI, 86, 93, 98 (Weekly Interlake, April 3, 24, May 15, 1891); ibid., XI, 142.

the Great Northern progressed westward and for a short time there was keen rivalry between the Crescent and the State of Montana as their owners cut passenger and freight rates in an effort to attract more business. The owners soon decided that combination was more profitable than competition and agreed to pool their business, one boat running alternate weeks. Passenger fares were raised from $2.50 to $3.00 and freight rates went up, also.[20] The boats continued to run for several years but since the Great Northern provided easy access to the upper valley and the reservation prevented settlement of the Lower Flathead, traffic was reduced to a trickle. One by one the boats dropped from service to rot on the lake bottom or the beach, and it was not until the opening of the reservation in 1910 that steamboating again became an important means of transportation in western Montana.

In this early period, the steamboats played an important role in the development of the area adjacent to the lake and their contribution was not without excitement. The lake, unprotected by high mountains at either end, is materially affected by winds which blow from the south, and which create waves of from eight to ten feet high. Many times the boats were forced to seek shelter in the nearest

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[20] Ibid., VI, 127 (Weekly Interlake, August 7, 1891); ibid., IX, 144.

bay when the wind arose, and sometimes near tragedies occurred. On January 31, 1891, the Carter, with a large cargo of freight and passengers, had one of the most dangerous trips ever made on the lake. In a blinding, driving, snow storm, the rudder slipped out of place and the boat came near to being dashed to pieces on the rocks near the shore of Wild Horse Island. Just at the last moment the difficulty was repaired and the rocks were safely passed. In the blinding snow it was impossible for Bill Cheney, the pilot, to keep on course and the boat finally got stuck in the ice about three miles off shore. All night long the passengers huddled on deck and in the staterooms, but next morning everyone walked safely ashore to confound the rumors that all had been lost.[21] In the winter the lake usually froze over for varying distances from the shore but navigation was continued as long as possible by breaking a channel through to the landings. After the Crescent nearly met disaster in November, 1891, while trying to break through to Demersville, all three of the big boats were stripped with sheet iron to protect their wooden sides, but winter navigation was still dangerous.[22]

In the period between the completion of the Great

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[21] Ibid., VI, 71 (Weekly Interlake, Feb. 13, 1891).

[22] Ibid., V, 218, (Weekly Interlake, Nov. 20, 1891).

Northern in 1893 and the opening of the reservation in 1910, the few boats which remained were maintained largely by local traffic which, because of the time, expense, and trouble involved in transportation and travel on the roads of those days, preferred the cheaper and faster service offered by the boats. In 1908 the only boats of importance on the lake were the Eva B, the Queen, and the Mary S, none of them larger than about 50 tons.[23] Before the end of the next two years, as hundreds of settlers came in to take up land on the reservation, the New Klondyke, the City of Polson, the City of Kalispell, the Montana, and a number of other boats were launched, and navigation again became congested.

The New Klondyke, built by Eugene Hodge, who had organized the Hodge Navigation Company, was the largest boat ever to sail on the lake. Launched in May, 1910, it

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[23] Board of Railroad Commissioners of the State of Montana, Second Annual Report (1908-09), p. 166. The Eva B, owned by H. S. Millbank of the Eva B. Boat Co., could carry thirty passengers and seven and a half tons of freight. See Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fourth Annual Report, (1911), p. 135; Flathead Courier, Sept. 22, 1910. The Queen, owned by W. M. Cramer, could carry forty-two passengers and ten tons of freight. The Mary S, owned by the Flathead Lake Navigation Company, could carry twenty passengers and three tons of freight. See Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fifth Annual Report (1912), p. 206. Before 1908 the most important boat in operation was the Klondyke, built by Eugene Hodge. See Braumberger, op. cit., p. 7. This boat was probably of medium size and since it is not mentioned in the list of boats for which dockage fees were charged in 1908, it probably was not running then. See Board of Railroad Commissioners, Second Annual Report (1908-09), p. 166.

was 120 feet long, twenty-six feet wide and was capable of carrying 425 passengers and 110 tons of freight.[24] This boat made daily round trips between Polson, Dayton, and Somers under Hodge's ownership until 1914. George Williams, Captain N. A. Palmer, and several others bought him out in that year, but retained the name of the company.[25]

The City of Polson was launched June 15, 1910, by R. T. Austin and J. W. Swanson, who organized the East Side Navigation Company. This boat was sixty-one feet long, and twelve feet wide, had two gasoline engines, and could carry seventy-five passengers and nineteen tons of freight. The City of Polson made night trips between Polson and Somers, and day trips to east shore points during the summer. Her sides were covered with boiler plate and the company attempted to maintain day-time winter service through the ice. In 1911 she was damaged in a storm near Rollins but was repaired. In 1915 she was taken up Flathead River to Lake McDonald, in Glacier Park, where she remained in service for a number of years.[26]

The City of Kalispell made its first trip in July,

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[24]Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fourth Annual Report (1911), p. 135; Flathead Courier, June 2, 1910.

[25]Ibid., June 11, 1914.

[26]Ibid., June 30, 1910, Dec. 2, 1910, Jan. 6, 1911, June 24, 1915; Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fourth Annual Report (1911), p. 135.

1910. First owned by the Flathead Lake Transportation Company, this boat was eighty feet long, had two thirty horsepower engines, and could carry eighty passengers and twenty tons of freight.[27]

The Montana, not to be confused with the State of Montana, which had been active during the earlier period of lake navigation, was launched in 1910 by the Flathead Lake Transportation Company. She was capable of carrying 160 passengers and forty tons of freight. During 1910 the Montana was disabled in a severe storm but by the next year had been overhauled and was the only boat able to maintain all winter service. In 1919, fire of undetermined origin badly damaged her so that she was again out of service for several months.[28]

These large boats, together with many others,[29]

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[27] Ibid., p. 135; Flathead Courier, July 21, 1910. Ownership of these boats and the ones to be mentioned changed so often and records are so inaccurate, (for instance, the use of incomplete company names making it impossible to tell the difference between the Flathead Lake Transportation Company, Flathead Lake Navigation Company and the Flathead Company), that no effort is here made to indicate ownership.

[28] Ibid., Aug. 17, 1910, March 10, 1911, May 29, 1919; Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fourth Annual Report (1911), p. 135.

[29] In addition to the above boats, in 1911 the following vessels were in operation: Doman, 160 passengers, forty tons of freight, owned by Taylor Bros; Eva B, thirty passengers, seven and a half tons of freight, owned by

were kept busy supplying the needs of the rapidly developing lake country. There is no record of the number of passengers carried but it must have been considerable.[30] After the new farms which had been established within hauling distance of the lake had started to produce, most of the freight carried consisted of wheat which was shipped from Polson to the Great Northern branch line at Somers.[31]

Taylor Bros.; Black Mariar and Albatross, both ninety tons of freight, owned by George Fessenden; Cassie D., twenty-five passengers, owned by O. Denney; Swan, twenty-six passengers, seven tons of freight, owned by E. D. Moffatt; Big Fork, one hundred passengers, thirty-six tons of freight, owned by Anderson and Caldwell; Flyer, fifty passengers, thirteen tons of freight, owned by Fessenden and Bart; and the Mary S, twenty passengers, three tons of freight, owned by C. J. Enterline. Pilots and captains licensed to operate on the lake included A. P. Anderson, R. M. Bond, W. H. Clubb, W. M. Cramer, C. J. Enterline, F. A. Fletcher, G. A. Fessenden, K. R. Hellen, Eugene Hodge, S. B. Huff, Angus H. McDonald, G. A. Mitchell, E. D. Moffatt, Alvin Rouse, William Schuett, and W. M. Taylor. See Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fourth Annual Report (1911), p. 135. During this time the Northwest Transportation Company, with five barges of 120 tons and the Flyer, a former passenger boat used as a tug, was also in business. See Flathead Courier, May 5, 1910. In most cases, the ownership indicated here was not that under which each boat was operated during its entire life.

[30] On November 25, 1910, it was reported that many homeseekers were still coming in even though most of the land near Polson was taken. "Every boat brings in many strangers who are looking for lands or investments." Ibid., Nov. 25, 1910.

[31] The Great Northern branch line had been built from Kalispell to Somers about 1900 and there was no need to navigate the upper river. Below the lake, several attempts were made to navigate the river but without success. In September, 1912, the City of Dixon was launched at Sloan's Ferry by the Dixon & Sloan Transportation Company, organized

In 1910, about 100,000bushels had been shipped from Polson, all but 8,000 bushels of which had gone on the Klondyke. By 1915, the amount had increased to 417,000 bushels.[32] In addition to farm products and livestock from the entire lake country, nearly all the goods sold by the merchants in the towns surrounding the lake were brought to them from the railhead by way of the boats.[33]

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by Roberts, Pearson and Taylor of Missoula. The City of Dixon, seventy feet long and sixteen feet wide, had a sixty-five horsepower engine, a stern paddlewheel, and was intended for freight and passenger service between Dixon and the foot of the falls a few miles below Polson. Late in June the next year, the boat made a round trip to Sloan, at the mouth of the Little Bitterroot. She carried twenty-six passengers, a crew of six and three tons of freight, and the approximately twenty mile trip took six hours going up, less than two hours coming down. In September she was tied up because of low water. It was believed that the enterprise would pay if the river was dredged and, through Congressman Evans' efforts, a government survey was began to determine the navigability of the river. In June of 1914 the City of Dixon made a round trip to Norrisvale in nine hours, returning with a carload of hogs. Late in August the boat was struck by lightening and burned and it was said that her whole history had been marked by disaster. There was little further interest in river navigation until late in 1915 when C. H. Smith and O. C. Nemitz began building a smaller steel boat on the river. This boat was launched in April, 1916, and made several runs but the building of the N. P. branch line to Polson in 1917 definitely killed river navigation. See Flathead Courier, April 12, 1912; July 5, 1912; Sept. 21, 1912; June 27, 1913; Sept. 18, 1914; Jan. 22, 1914; June 4, 1914; Aug. 27, 1914; May 27, 1915; Sept. 16, 1915; March 2, 1916.

[32] Ibid., Sept. 22, 1916.

[33] Ibid., Jan. 3, 1913.

One of the greatest inconveniences that the boat companies had to contend with in endeavoring to maintain satisfactory service was the lack of adequate dock space. In 1909 there had been but three good docks on the lake, one at Somers with 1,100 feet of water frontage and owned by the Somers Lumber Company, and one each at Polson and Dayton with two hundred and one hundred feet of water frontage, respectively, owned by the Flathead Lake Transportation Company. This company leased the large dock at Somers for $1,300 per month and in turn leased space to three other boat owners for rates averaging about $20 a month. Even at that early date there was a pressing need for more docking space, but all attempts to build another at Somers were obstructed by the Somers Lumber Company's refusal to permit navigation in that portion of the lake which it used for its own purposes.[34] The next year a new dock was built at Rollins and the Great Northern built a small dock in connection with its warehouse at Somers. This last dock was large enough for only one boat and congestion was not relieved. In addition, the railroad company delivered the freight to the first boat which docked, regardless of its routing, on the pretext that this action relieved congestion. The boat owners maintained that most of the

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[34] Board of Railroad Commissioners, Second Annual Report, (1910), pp. 123-24.

trouble lay in the fact that their boats had to run light because the railroad was slow in getting freight from the cars to the dock.[35] At the southern end of the lake, the situation was the same except that it was complicated by a lack of warehouse space and exhorbitant charges for rental of lake frontage. A Mrs. Thompson had a five year lease on almost the entire Polson lake front, obstensively for sand and gravel purposes, and her payments were only $60 a year. She charged $600 a year to sublet a small lot necessary for a dock and those who had built the dock charged the boat owners from $15 to $60 a month for dock space. In 1911, Mrs. Thompson's lease was broken on the grounds of misrepresentation and more dockage space could then be maintained at a more reasonable rate.[36] On both the east and west shores the congestion was gradually relieved as docks were built at the small towns.[37]

As in the earlier period, the boats had to contend with the freezing over of the lake. Navigation generally closed the last of December and reopened in March. Sometimes it was possible for one or two boats to maintain service all winter when only the bays froze, but in general,

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[35] Ibid. (1910), pp. 123-24.

[36] Flathead Courier, Feb. 17, 1911; Dec. 1, 1911.

[37] Ibid., Jan. 27, 1911. The ranchers near Big Arm and the other small towns on the west lake shore got together to build docks from which their products could be loaded.

wagons and stages carried most of the traffic between Polson and Somers during cold weather.[38]

The peak of activity on the lake was reached in 1915 when more than twenty boats, with a combined capacity of approximately 1,023 passengers and nine hundred tons of freight, were in service.[39] After this, the number of boats steadily declined and ownership became characterized

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[38] Ibid., Nov. 25, 1910; Jan. 5, 1912; Jan. 3, 1913; April 27, 1922. When the bays froze over, landings were made on the ice. In 1913 the Big Fork ran all winter, landing at the Narrows. The winter tie-up of 1922-23 was the longest on record, navigation resuming about April 27.

[39] The boats in service in 1915 as listed in Board of Railroad Commissioners, Eighth Annual Report (1915), p. 267, were P.S.T. No's. 1 and 2 (barges) and Demersville, Polson-Somers Transportation Co.; Montana and Kalispell, Flathead Lake Transportation Co.; Moose, Howard James, Guthrie and W. E. Wells, Somers Lumber Co.; Black Mariar, Albatross (barges), Klondyke, Defiance, Eva B., and Somers, Hodge Navigation Company; Doman, Taylor Bros.; Comet, Bradshaw and Gaston; Greyhound, Matravers and Hoile; Antoinette, W. H. Smead; Trade Dollar, Pat Mooney; Mary S., Snell and McKelvie, and Lena, H. Garth. Pilots licensed to navigate the lake were R. C. Abbell, F. Adams, A. P. Anderson, Ole Beck, R. M. Bond, E. H. Bradshaw, W. H. Clubb, E. M. Dewey, H. Garth, C. Holland, C. W. Hoile, A. H. McDonald, C. H. Matravers, Pat Mooney, E. R. Palmer, N. A. Palmer, W. M. Schuett, W. H. Smead, L. G. Snell, E. Von Ewen, L. Wall, and Fred West. The Demersville was built by Eugene Hodge in 1914. Flathead Courier, March 25, 1915. Two boats which were not listed as having secured licenses in 1915 were the Helena, 115 feet long, twenty-three feet wide, launched at Bigfork late in 1915 by James Kehoe and Company, and the Pastime, whose captain in 1912 started a bar on the boat to test the prohibitionary laws as they related to the lake. Ibid., Dec. 2, 1915; Sept. 6, 1912.

by concentration. In 1918, there were still seventeen boats operating, but, in contrast to former years, when there had been nearly as many owners as there were boats, there were only seven owners.[40] Two years later concentration of ownership, in this case a sure sign of declining traffic and profitableness, reached a climax when the Flathead Lake Company was organized by a group of Polson men to take over the property, including boats, barges, docks, and warehouses, of the Hodge Navigation Company, the Polson-Somers Transportation Company, and Flathead Lake Navigation Company.[41]

During the next decade, lake navigation rapidly declined and by 1925 had ceased to be of major importance as a necessary part of the transportation system of the Lower Flathead. This decline was primarily due to competition from land transportation as automobiles became popular, the roads on both sides of the lake improved, and the Northern Pacific built a branch line to Polson. In 1921 the Flathead Lake Company used busses to carry its passengers in the winter and made little attempt to maintain service through the ice.[42] By the next year, nearly all

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[40]Railroad and Public Service Commission, Eleventh Annual Report (1917-18), p. 229.

[41]The organizers of this company were A. F. Mason, J. H. Cline, C. A. Stone, W. G. Dewey, F. L. Gray, William Irvine, J. L. McIntire, and G. B. Owen. Flathead Courier, March 11, 1920.

[42]Ibid., Dec. 1, 1921.

the large boats except the City of Kalispell and the Klondyke had ceased to run. The City of Kalispell, with the engine and boiler of the Big Fork, was used on a daily passenger schedule, while the Klondyke was used for excursions and one run a week to westshore points with freight.[43] In 1925 navigation on the lake was reduced to service by the Betty C, a gasoline powered launch capable of carrying twenty-five passengers. This boat had been built the year before by G. E. Cottrell of Somers and made connections between the Great Northern at Somers and the Northern Pacific at Polson. The Klondyke was then resting on the bottom near the Polson dock and the State Public Service Commission refused to issue a permit to allow the boat company to run the Kalispell because of her unsound condition.[44] By September, 1925, the financial condition of the Flathead Lake Company had become critical and the organization went into receivership. The City Council of Polson was able to buy the company's property at Polson, its dock, and two warehouses, for $1,000.[45] The Klondyke was raised and repaired and at the end of the decade was used only for excursion trips.[46] The Skinkoots, a fifty

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[43] Ibid., June 1, 1922.

[44] Ibid., April 3, 1924; Aug. 7, 1924; March 12, 1925.

[45] Ibid., Sept. 10, 1925.

[46] Ibid., Aug. 2, 1928.

foot, gasoline powered launch carrying fifty passengers, launched by Captain Anderson in 1926, was used for a time for passenger travel between Somers and Polson via west shore points,[47] and the Paul Bunyan, the Somers Lumber Company tug, continued to run until the late 1940's, but now, speed-boats and water-taxis have taken the place of the big steamboats and the "romantic era on western waters" has come to an end.

Though lake navigation was a public service and as such, subject to regulation by the state Board of Railroad Commissioners (later the Railroad and Public Service Commission), it was not until 1917 that this body assumed full jurisdiction over the rates and regulations involved in lake transportation. State navigation laws had their beginning in 1909 when a law was passed providing that the Railroad Commission had jurisdiction over all docks and wharves within the state and full power to regulate, determine, and fix all dockage and wharfage fees. With this jurisdiction, the board in 1910 set the maximum charge for use of the Somers Lumber Company dock.[48] In 1911, an act was passed which provided for inspection of all boats

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[47] Ibid., July 15, 1926.

[48] The charges ranged from $25 per month for boats of one hundred tons or over, to $5 per month for those of less than ten tons. Board of Railroad Commissioners, Third Annual Report (1910), pp. 122, 126.

carrying passengers or freight for hire, set up the office of steamboat inspector, who had the power to require that boats conform to certain standards of construction and safety, defined rules of navigation, and prohibited the obstruction of any navigable waters. Captain N. A. Palmer was appointed steamboat inspector. On his first examination of the boats on Flathead Lake, he found that none of them were equipped with life saving devices. Certificates were issued to those boats which complied with the regulations and some were forced to tie up until their owners could properly equip them.[49]

Until 1917, the Railroad and Public Service Commission assumed no further jurisdiction over lake transportation companies but in that year the state Attorney-General advised that it had full jurisdiction over their operation. That same year, the Commission determined one case involving rate charges and, in answer to demands, established a maximum rate structure.[50] In 1919 the last

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[49] Ibid. (1911), pp. 124, 126, 129-134.

[50] The case involved a protest over action by the Hodge Navigation Co. in increasing the rate of flour and mill feed from 7½¢ to 10¢ per cwt., while wheat was left at 7½¢. The Commission ordered the original rate restored. Maximum rates set included 20¢ per cwt. of less than carload shipments of groceries, hardware, and miscellaneous articles, $1.50 per head of horses and cattle, $3 to $4 per auto, fares from Somers to Lakeside, 50¢; to Rollins, $1; to Dayton, $1.25; to Elmo, Big Arm, and Polson, $1.50. Ibid., (1917-18), pp. 25-27.

case of importance concerning lake transporation, and one illustrating the state of the business, was decided. The Hodge Navigation Company, the Polson-Somers Transportation Company, and the Flathead Lake Transportation Company applied for permission to increase rates, alleging that because of increased costs and the advent of the Northern Pacific branch line to Polson, it was impossible to operate at a profit. The Commission decided that the decrease in operating revenues was due to the fact that bulk commodities, such as carloads of grain, coal, hay, and livestock, which had previously moved *via* the lake and the Great Northern, were now being diverted to the Northern Pacific. The only business left to the lake transportation companies was the passenger business, local freight and express, and a few carloads of commodities originating at east and west shore points. In view of these facts, the commission allowed the companies to amend their rates upward.[51]

The improvements in land transportation, which finally killed lake navigation, had been a long time in

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[51]Hodge Navigation Company submitted the following statement of operating expenses and revenues;

	1917	1918	Decrease in 1918
Operating Revenues	$72,005.37	$27,342.30	$44,663.07
Operating Expenses	63,133.41	29,160.58	33,972.83
Gross Income	$ 8,871.96	-$ 1,818.28	

See *ibid.* (1918-19), pp. 18-19.

coming. During the early decades of the century, the roads, especially those around the lake, were rough, dangerous, and usually impassable in wet weather, for the few automobiles that were in use then. In 1910, much of the road work was done by convicts and it was not until that year that a gravelled road was built from Arlee to Ronan. R. P. Vinson began running daily stages between Dixon and Polson in April and took nearly twelve hours for the round trip. The Williams Transportation Company, which had the mail contract between Ravalli and Polson, took ten hours to cover the distance of approximately thirty-four miles. By 1912, the Concord Tourist Wagons, the Cadillacs of the horse and buggy days, began to give away to Wilcox passenger cars on the roads south of the lake but whenever it rained, the horses were put back in service. Stages and wagons continued to be used almost exclusively on the roads around the lake and as late as 1915 the Hodge Navigation Company advertised special rates for hauling cars between Polson and Somers.[52]

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[52] Flathead Courier, May 26, 1910; June 16, 1910; Aug. 4, 1910. Tom Bateman was the first to mechanize his stage line. In 1912 he put in service a thirty horsepower Wilcox, sixteen passenger automobile between Ravalli and Polson, making the trip in one hour and sixteen minutes, at a speed of eighteen miles an hour. Ibid., May 24, 1912. Hodge Navigation Company advertised: "Save gasoline and tires. Shun the mud and see Flathead Lake at the same time." Ibid., April 29, 1915; July 6, 1916.

With problems such as these, it is no wonder that the people of the Lower Flathead welcomed with great enthusiasm, and not a little gullability, several schemes to build a railroad north and south through the valley. Between 1910 and 1916, nearly a half dozen different railroad building schemes were formulated, to bring excitement and then disillusionment.

The first of the prospective railroads was the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Puget Sound, which, in 1910, was rumored to be preparing to build a branch line from Missoula to Polson by way of Ravalli. Later, it was said that the route was to be from Lewistown, Montana, to Spokane by way of the Swan valley, Bigfork, and Kalispell. Though this route was surveyed in 1911,[53] construction never began and the Lower Flathead was left to give its support to a more inviting plan.

The next road was to be an electric line from Whitefish to Polson via the west lake shore. The Whitefish-Polson Electric Railroad Company, with O. P. J. Mosby as vice president, was organized, and in 1910 sold $100,000 worth of stock. By the end of the next year, a total of $180,000 had been subscribed and two 440 year franchises were secured on twenty-five miles of right-of-way, but

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[53] Ibid., April 28, 1910; June 30, 1911.

several factors, including the ruggedness of the terrain, prevented construction.[54] During the same time, a group of men from Bigfork and Butte planned to build an electric railroad from Columbia Falls to Polson *via* the east lake shore, with power furnished by a hydroelectric plant on one of the streams flowing into the lake. In April, 1911, it was reported that Vincent R. Coon of Detroit, promoter of this line, had raised $450,000 from eastern capitalists but needed $300,000 from local sources before construction could begin. The local sources were evidently becoming a little wary of such proposals, for a year later a local paper printed: "It is rumored that the McGinnis electric railroad will not come out of its winter quarters with the ground hog but will remain in 'innocuous desuetude'."[55] Later in the year, however, hearty support was given to plans to build a railroad from Missoula to Polson. W. A. Clark was said to be willing to back such a line and O. P. J. Mosby of the Whitefish-Polson Electric Railroad offered to give him the subscriptions and franchises that the latter company held, if he would extend the line to Whitefish.

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[54] *Ibid.*, Aug. 27, 1910; Dec. 9, 1910; Nov. 24, 1911. It had been hoped that the line could be built for $7,500 per mile, but Angel Hill proved too big an obstacle. See *ibid.*, May 12, 1911.

[55] *Ibid.*, Dec. 23, 1910; April 28, 1911; Feb. 23, 1912. Evidently, McGinnis was the organizer of this company; another who was involved was J. A. Talbott.

In February, 1912, surveys were begun on a prospective right-of-way by the new Flathead Power and Traction Company but the next month a local paper reported: "Since there is no immediate prospect of a railroad to Polson, lake navigation should be maintained the year around."[56] Though several other promoters tried to raise interest in their pet schemes, the prevailing attitude in the Lower Flathead toward railroads during the next few years was summed up in the following observation by the same local paper: "A party of railroad officials were [sic] in Polson this week but like all the rest of that class of visitors were merely here to look at the scenery."[57]

Early in 1916, perhaps because of the increased prosperity of the farmers due to the World War, interest

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[56] Ibid., Sept. 22, 1911; Oct. 13, 1911; Nov. 24, 1911; Feb. 2, 1912; Feb. 8, 1912; March 15, 1912. The survey took place Feb. 2-8, 1912. Such a short period taken suggests difficulties in obtaining a right-of-way.

[57] Ibid., May 17, 1912. Other prospective railroads included one promoted by Colonel White. This was to be an electrified line from Missoula to Polson, built according to specifications for branch lines of the Milwaukee in hopes that that company would buy it as one of their feeders. White hired engineers to make the necessary survey and said that though he did not care to make money for himself, he hoped that the farmers along the line would donate the right-of-way. There were definite prospects of the N. P. building to Polson and the farmers were not interested in White's proposal. See ibid., July 20, 1916. Grading was actually begun on the Flathead Inter-Urban Railroad from Kalispell but where the line was to run or who promoted it, I have been unable to find out. See ibid., Nov. 3, 1911.

in a railroad again became strong. People from all parts of the Lower Flathead met at Ronan and Missoula to consider the problem and a committee was appointed to draw up a plan to incorporate a company and to collect data. Before many steps had been taken, however, the long wait for railroad service to Polson was virtually ended by an announcement from the Northern Pacific that it had decided to build northward from Dixon. Unlike the previous proposals, this one came true. A survey was finished, grading completed, and track-laying begun by the middle of October, 1917. By the middle of December the track was at Polson, and all the hopes of many years for fast, efficient transportation seemed to at last have been realized.[58]

The transportation system of the Lower Flathead was still not adequate. As the use of automobiles increased, train service to Polson and Somers was greatly reduced[59] and the development of a highway system did not keep pace with the new means of travel. The roads which were most travelled, especially those along the shores of the lake, were not kept in good condition and were frequently blocked in the winter. The great need was for good all-weather roads which would make all parts of the area accessible to both the local inhabitants and the many visitors.

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[58] Ibid., March 2, 1916; March 23, 1916; June 16, 1916; Nov. 1, 1917; Dec. 13, 1917.

[59] Ibid., October 22, 1925; December 24, 1925.

CHAPTER VII

SETTLEMENT, 1883-1945

Along with the early activities in stock raising and transportation came the spread of settlement over the whole Lower Flathead area. Before 1883, settlement was confined within the boundaries of the reservation. Small villages were established by the Indians, and the people trying to civilize them, at St. Ignatius, the Agency, near present Dixon, at the foot of Flathead Lake, on Crow Creek, and at Dayton.[1] It is probable that had not outside forces acted, these settlements would have remained no more than villages for many years. As it was, the influx of stockmen and other settlers after 1883 caused them to grow and others to be established in the area north of the reservation.

Within several years after the construction of the Northern Pacific through the reservation, a small store was established at Elmo[2] and Harry Lambert had built a trading post at present Polson.[3] Another post was built at

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[1] Palladino, op. cit., pp. 175-77.

[2] "Statement of Tyson D. Duncan," in Johns, Collection, I, 16.

[3] Flathead Courier, May 26, 1910.

Ronan Springs, later called Ronan,[4] and all three of them served the travellers going northward. By 1888, there were enough Indians, half-breeds, and whites at Dayton to warrant the Jesuits to establish a church there.[5] Several years later, the same conditions led the Indian agent to erect a sub-station, consisting of three houses, barns, sheds, and a saw mill, at Ronan.[6] Farther west, a small settlement sprang up at the hot springs in Little Bitterroot Valley to serve the visitors who came from the Upper Flathead.[7]

During the late 1880's and the 1890's, some of these settlements grew slightly. Dixon and Ravalli on the Northern Pacific, Polson and Somers at the ends of Flathead Lake, and Arlee, Elmo, Dayton, and Proctor on the roads between the extremities of the Lower Flathead, all experienced some growth because of their location on transporation routes to the Upper Flathead. North of the reservation, most of the lands suitable for agriculture had been homesteaded or preempted by the late 1890's. The Lower

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[4]Ronan Pioneer, February 27, 1941.

[5]P. Ronan, "Annual Report, 1889," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1889), p. 229.

[6]J. T. Carter, "Annual Report, 1894,) in Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior (1894), II, 175.

[7]Johns, Collection, X, 235.

Flathead was still a frontier area, however, and it was not until the Indian lands were opened to white occupancy that the valley became a settled, integrated community.

The first step in the opening of the reservation came in 1887 with the passage of the General Allotment (Dawes) Act. This act provided that after surveys of the various Indian reservations, allotments in severalty were to be made to the Indians and the surplus lands then sold.[8] In that year, the Flathead Indian Agent reported that most of the Indians in the Lower Flathead were opposed to taking up allotments because they thought that such action meant that the lands would be full of whites.[9] No action was taken to open the reservation for a few years because many of the Indians had not demonstrated sufficient advancement to be thrown into intimate contact with the whites and there was as yet little demand from homeseekers for new lands in this part of the country. More settlers came in, however, and by 1900 pressure was strong for a decision to be made.

In answer to the pressure, in 1904 an act was passed authorizing the survey of the reservation and allotment of lands to the Indians. Upon completion of the

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[8]Wright, op. cit., pp. 6, 9.

[9]Ronan, "Annual Report, 1887," op. cit., p. 140.

allotments, a five man commission was to inspect, classify, and appraise the surplus lands by forty acre plots. When the classification and appraisal were completed, the land was to be disposed of under the general provisions of the homestead, mineral, and townsite laws, except such portions as were reserved for special purposes.[10]

The survey and allotment of lands were not completed until 1908, when 2,460 eighty and 160 acre allotments were approved by the Department of Interior. Though some of the old Indians were dissatisfied, there was no resistance to the allotment work because all realized the necessity of having their homes definitely located. Between 1904 and 1910, a series of acts were passed by Congress which reserved or set aside a total of more than 60,000 acres for townsites, reservoir and power sites, educational and religious institutions, and other special purposes.[11]

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[10] Wright, op. cit., p. 9; Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1905), I, 450.

[11] Bellew, op. cit., p. 256; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1906), p. 75; Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior (1907), II, 119; Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1908), II, 64. Forty acre townsites were reserved at Arlee, Dayton, Ravalli, Dixon, and Ronan, eighty acre townsites were reserved at Polson and St. Ignatius, and 160 acres around the hot springs at Camas were set aside for the benefit of the Indians. Irrigation and power sites were reserved along the lake shore and Flathead River. Additional townsites were platted at Camas, Pablo, Big Arm, Allard, Yellow Bay, Flathead, Revais, D'Aste, and Moiese. See Flathead Courier, May 5, 1910.

Appraisal of the surplus lands, at from 30¢ to $7 per acre depending on class, was completed in November, 1908, but there was delay in opening them to settlement while the location of the bison range was being decided upon. Finally, on May 22, 1909, a presidential proclamation was issued, providing for entry by numbers. Kalispell and Missoula were designated as places of registration, which was to take place from July 15 to August 5.[12]

Immediately, the rush of homeseekers began. By early the next year, 81,363 applications for land in the Flathead had come in from all parts of the country.[13] The actual opening and settlement of the reservation began early in 1910 when the number holders began filing on their selections at the local land offices. Surprisingly, little interest was shown at first in the opening. Out of the first three thousand names called, only 403 filed on their selections.[14] A large portion of the land was taken up by squatters, however, and as several years passed, more and more homesteaders came in. To accommodate the steady stream of homeseekers, much of the land previously reserved

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[12] Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1909), II, 42.

[13] "Annual Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, 1910," in ibid. (1910), I, 112.

[14] Flathead Courier, May 5, June 11; Sept. 15, 1910.

for special purposes was opened and the Indians were allowed to sell or lease part of their allotments, so that between 1910 and 1934, a total of more than 610,000 acres of the Flathead reservation had passed out of Indian ownership.

The effect of the opening of the reservation upon the previously rather quiet life in the Lower Flathead was spectacular as a great land boom and speculation developed, towns sprang up and various schemes were evolved to hasten the settlement of the area. It is probable that before 1920 most of the land suitable for farming had been taken up. New settlers could be accommodated only on submarginal forested, hilly, or rocky lands or on portions of established farms which were for sale. Later experience was to show that an adequate standard of living depended on a delicate balance between population level and the amount and type of available land. Nevertheless, great efforts were made, and still were being made as late as 1938, to increase the population of the Lower Flathead.[15] Some of these efforts were purely speculative.

Two speculative settlement schemes of interest were those developed by Colonel A. A. White and the Great Western Land Company. Colonel White's connections with the

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[15]Renne and Helburn, op. cit., p. 45; Ronan Pioneer, April 21, 1938.

Lower Flathead began when he became involved with the purchase and sale of lake shore lots between 1915 and 1924. The act providing for the survey of the reservation had also provided for the survey and sale of two-to five-acre tracts, as so-called "villa sites," along that portion of the lake shore in the reserve. The survey did not take place until 1910 and it was not until five years later that sales began. Finally, under orders issued in March, 1915, 889 two-to five-acre parcels of land were offered for sale at public auction at Polson, Dayton, and Kalispell between July 26 and August 7.[16] By the terms of the order, a buyer could purchase any number of lots. The minimum price was $10 an acre, with 25% paid at the date of sale and the remainder over a period of time.[17] When the sale opened, buyers had come from all parts of the country and the lots were rapidly disposed of. Prices ranged from $15 to $25

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[16] "Annual Report of the Commissioner of General Land Office, 1915," in Annual Report of the Department of Interior (1915), I, 260-61; Flathead Courier, April 28, 1910; It was predicted that sale of the villa sites would mean that more farms would be thrown open for settlement and the lake front would "bloom like a rose." See ibid., April 14, 1910. The reason for the long delay between the survey and sale of the sites was given by the Interior Department as lack of demand. The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce was working to have the sites sold and said that they should be advertised, that the lack of demand was due to the fact that people did not know about them. See ibid., March 18, 1915.

[17] Ibid., April 15, 1915.

per acre and total receipts were over $130,000. The majority of the lots, however, had been acquired by one man, Colonel White. He purchased nearly all of Wild Horse Island and at the end of the sale bought up all of the unsold tracts, more than 400 of them, for $15 an acre. Though it was reported that he had invested $75,000 in purchasing the lots he actually had made only required down payments, which totaled about $18,000.[18]

Colonel White now began an extensive, but generally unsuccessful, promotion effort to sell his lots. During the next nine years, interrupted only by the period of American participation in the World War, he conducted advertising campaigns all over the country, ran cars and boats to carry tourists free from Glacier Park to inspect his holdings, held a widely advertised six day auction of lots, and persuaded both the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads to reduce their fares to western Montana. Though he succeeded in selling some lots, he bought nearly all the others on which payment had been defaulted by the original purchasers and was not able to maintain his own payments.[19]

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[18] Ibid., August 12, 1915; April 10, 1924; June 26, 1924.

[19] Ibid., Sept. 16, 1915; July 27, 1916; Aug. 24, 1916; Oct. 30, 1919; May 4, 1922; June 20, 1922.

By 1923, local residents of the lake area had become impatient with the lack of results with which Colonel White's promotion efforts had been attended, and, on the grounds that his inability to either sell them or keep up his payments on them retarded the development of the lake shore, they petitioned the Interior Department to take action to place the "villa sites" on sale.[20] The petitions were heeded. In June of the next year, after prolonged negotiations between Colonel White and the General Land Office an agreement was reached by which the $18,000 that White had previously paid were taken in full payment for 192 lots, while the rest were forfeited, to be sold by the government. Government sales began in August, 1924, at Kalispell, and were from the start a disappointment because of high appraised value. The next year 23 lots were sold, mostly to western Montana people, with prices ranging up to more than $700 per lot. With such high prices and the general lack of interest in real estate which was primarily useful only for summer home sites, it was several years yet before most of the lake shore had passed into private hands.[21]

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[20] Ibid., Aug. 30, 1923.

[21] Ibid., April 10, 1924; June 26, 1924; Aug. 14, 1924; July 9, 1925.

The other speculative settlement scheme, that of the Great Western Land Company, took place between 1921 and 1923. The company, an eastern organization with head offices in Washington, D. C., proposed to colonize the Lower Flathead with landless men from the east. Late in 1921, offices were established at Polson, Ronan, Pablo, Arlee, St. Ignatius, and Charlo, and the company began securing options on all available acreage. Supposedly endorsed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, and under the energetic leadership of its vice-president and general manager, Mr. Larsen, the company began an extensive advertising campaign in the newspapers, including sixty foreign language papers, and held a naming contest in which the appellation "The Flathead, Garden of the Rockies" won a local resident a $50 prize. Within a few months, Great Western had taken over the holdings of the Flathead Farms Company, a local organization, and had secured options to more than 40,000 acres of land.[22] Beginning early in 1922, the company, with the aid of reduced rates on the Northern Pacific, began to bring in prospective settlers

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[22] Ibid., Nov. 24, 1921; Dec. 1, 1921; March 2, 1922; Ronan Pioneer, Dec. 16, 1921. An advertisement of the Great Western Land Company appearing in the last cited paper reads: "We have the largest listing of irrigated farms, stock ranches, and dry farms in Montana and it is located on the Flathead, Garden of the Rockies. See us for a Square Deal."

to look over the land. The local population heartily supported these colonizing efforts in the belief that the company was the best agency for settling the country, but many wondered how much land could be sold at the prices that were being asked.[23] They might well have wondered, for though it was rumored that fifty-two homeseekers who arrived from St. Paul in April had purchased $150,000 worth of land in two days, that rumor and others which made the rounds were false. In August, 1923, the Great Western Land Company folded, having lost over $100,000, due it was said, to improper management and "general conditions."[24]

The "general conditions" which caused the failure of the Great Western Land Company, and also of Colonel White's "villa site" venture, were many but perhaps most important was the speculative nature of the settlement schemes themselves. Their promoters were primarily interested in making money, not in the welfare of the local community. The Great Western Company advertised its holdings as irrigated farms, stock ranches, and dry farms, with no indication that most of the land was in the last category. Such land, though submarginal and incapable of sufficient production

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[23] Ibid., March 17, 1922; March 3, 1922. The Northern Pacific reduced freight rates from 83 1/7¢ to 50¢ from St. Paul to Polson and Ronan. Flathead Courier, March 16, 1922.

[24] Ibid., April 27, 1922; Aug. 30, 1923.

for more than a minimum standard of living, was priced out of reach of the landless men--this was a period of agricultural depression--who were expected to purchase it. Colonel White's holdings along the sloping, rocky shores of the lake were not suited to agriculture and as yet there was little demand for summer home sites.

These two speculative land schemes, though they resulted in less settlement than had been hoped for, did serve to advertise the Lower Flathead to the rest of the country. Partly as a result, during the decades of the '30's and '40's the area experienced an increase in population amounting to about forty per cent. Part of the increase, especially that which occurred in the '30's, resulted from migration of drought-stricken farmers from the Great Plains region. Many of the newcomers settled on small farms in the area west of Flathead Lake. Considering the comparatively low average rainfall which prevails and the character of the terrain, it is probable that many of these people were not to maintain themselves on a satisfactory self-sustaining basis.[25]

The population increase which occurred in the late '30's and the '40's was of an entirely different character. By this time transportation facilities had improved suf-

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[25] Renne and Helburn, op. cit., pp. 3-14.

ficiently to allow easy access to the east shore of Flathead Lake, which was already known as an ideal location for summer homes, partly because of Colonel White's activities. During these years, the area received an influx of a wealthy class of people who bought up desirable lots, built beautiful homes, and introduced an entirely new element into local social and economic life. Land valuations were greatly increased because of demand and ability to pay, and, though some of these people maintained residence at the lake for only part of the year, many of them established permanent homes and entered the profitable cherry business.

Of the many towns which had been platted and for which high hopes had been held after the opening of the reservation,[26] only a few maintained their growth. In 1911, Camas had a population of about four hundred, lots were sold at from $100 to $850 apiece, and the town was advertised as a famous health resort.[27] In 1910, Dayton had a bank and, six year later, a population of three hundred.[28] Within a few years, these towns, and others which had shown a spectacular growth, were all but deserted. In 1917, the General Land Office authorized sale of the

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[26]See note 11, p. 129, for the list of towns.

[27]Flathead Courier, October 27, 1911.

[28]Ibid., April 28, 1910; September 22, 1916.

unsold lots at Yellow Bay, Big Arm, Camas, Charlo, and Pablo.[29] Local agricultural economy had not been large enough to support the number of towns which it had been anticipated would grow. After the first rush of settlers, only those towns which were located so as to be on vital transportation routes, or were the trading centers for fairly large areas, were able to maintain and increase their size. Polson, Ronan, St. Ignatius, and Dixon were fortun ate in this respect. Others disappeared almost completely and a few, such as Hot Springs and the small towns along the shores of Flathead Lake, did not die out completely only because they offered necessary service to the local inhabitants and to tourists.

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[29] Ibid., July 31, 1917.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE GARDEN OF THE ROCKIES"

In a contest held thirty years ago, a $50 prize was given for the most appropriate name descriptive of Lower Flathead Valley. The winning name was that which heads this chapter. Later it was written: "Always the human family has sought that land where the sun smiled and nature yielded most abundantly. The Lower Flathead Valley of Western Montana...has fulfilled that picture to many home-seekers from less favored lands... ."[1] Perhaps to a local Chamber of Commerce these words were true, but to most of the inhabitants of the Lower Flathead, it was more than the smiling sun and abundantly yielding nature which made the area what it is today. Though the area may have fulfilled the dreams of many home-seekers from "less favored lands," life here was not perfect, many problems arose, and many remain to be faced.

Agriculture was and still is, the occupation by which most of the people of the valley make their living and in this most important field the problems have been many. Perhaps the main one, not unique to this area, has been that of water. Green valleys and lush vegetative

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[1] S. Scearce, "The Garden of the Rockies," Ronan Pioneer, April 21, 1938.

growth in the spring are apt to create an exaggerated opinion of an area's productiveness. With the annual average rainfall varying from place to place and with that which falls at any one place varying considerably from year to year and month to month, the growing of crops, with the possible exception of grain, is very uncertain, even though the native plants may appear to grow luxuriously.[2]

For the first few years after the opening of the reservation, the crops raised in the newly cultivated soil seemed to belie this fact but such crops probably will never be raised again. In 1911, a dry year, it was reported that on a small ranch in the Dayton Creek valley barley, wheat, oats, timothy, and red-clover grew six feet high and strawberries, as large as teacups, yielded $800 an acre. On a farm near Polson, wheat with heads containing as many as 143 large, firm grains, averaged fifty-one bushels to the acre. The same year a cabbage weighing forty pounds was raised near Ronan and a potato crop near Elmo averaged more than 230 bushels per acre, while on a sage brush flat in the Little Bitterroot area, ploughed for the first time that year, the wheat crop averaged over fifty bushels per acre.[3] Surely nature was

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[2] W. DeYoung and R. C. Roberts, op. cit., p. 5.

[3] Flathead Courier, Sept. 2, 1911; Montana Board of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, Montana (1912), pp. 88, 98-9, 172, 227.

yielding bountifully. Actually, however, crop yields began to decline in a few years as the original fertility and moisture, stored by nature through many years under the unbroken sod, was rapidly used up by the grain and vegetable crops. As early as 1889, the Indian agent had reported that the agricultural outlook on the reservation was gloomy because a droughth had parched the country. The Indians' crops of hay, grain, and vegetables were a total failure and the only thing that could ensure productive farms was irrigation. In 1896 another Indian agent reported in the same vein.[4] Later, the white farmers began experiencing the same situation and irrigation, chiefly the Flathead Irrigation Project of the U. S. Indian Irrigation Service, became the outstanding factor in the agriculture of the Lower Flathead.

Irrigation had begun about 1855 in Mission Valley when the Jesuits took water from Mission Creek for their near-by fields. Later, a few Indians and whites constructed ditches from some of the larger streams to flood small areas. These were all individual, unplanned, and relatively inefficient efforts.[5] A planned program of irrigation

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[4]Ronan, "Annual Report, 1889," op. cit., p. 229; J. Carter, "Annual Report, 1896," Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior (1896), II, 185.

[5]G. L. Sperry, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project Engineer, Irrigation Development on the Flathead Project, p. 2.

began between 1885 and 1895 under the direction of the Indian agents with construction of two five-mile ditches from Jocko River to Indian farms in that valley. Many times during that period the farms along these ditches and in the creek bottom lands were the only ones which produced crops, proving the need for irrigation in the Lower Flathead.[6]

When preparations were made in 1904 to open the reservation to settlement, the foundation was laid for the Flathead Irrigation Project by provisions for a preliminary survey of the reservation to enable the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to recommend legislation for an adequate system of irrigation for the Indians and new settlers. In 1907 arrangements were made with the Reclamation Service by which that agency was to make the survey and carry on construction work.[7] The surveys demonstrated the feasibility of irrigation in much of the Lower Flathead and plans were drawn which called for the irrigation of about 100,000 acres of land in various parts of the reservation. Water was to be diverted from creeks and rivers rising in

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[6]Ronan, "Annual Report," (1885, 1889), Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, (1885), p. 129. (1889), p. 229; Carter, "Annual Report," (1895, 1896), Annual Report of the Secretary of Interior, (1895), II, 911, (1896), II, 185.

[7]"Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1907," Annual Report of the Department of Interior, (1907), II, 52; Sperry, op. cit., p. 2.

the mountains and conducted by canals directly to the land and to storage reservoirs. Plans were also laid to build a small power plant and pumping station on Flathead River about five miles below Polson to provide water to supplement that of the creeks.[8]

Work progressed slowly on the project. By 1910 about five thousand acres were served by the system in both Jocko and Mission Valleys. Early in 1909, work began on Newell Tunnel, designed to divert Flathead River while a dam, powerhouse, and pumping station were under construction, but in 1911 excavation was deferred until the need to pump water became apparent.[9] When the reservation was opened, the water expected for irrigation was not available and by 1917 only a few main canals and laterals had been completed. The first settlers were thus forced to farm by dry-land methods and it was because of the lack of water that wheat became established as the principal crop in most of the Lower Flathead.[10] During the next few years, a corps of government engineers worked steadily and by 1918, 567 farms with 16,000 acres were

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[8] Ibid., p. 3; A. J. Walker, Report of Condition Found to Exist on the Flathead Irrigation Project, Montana, p. 3.

[9] Ibid., p. 3.

[10] Figures gathered by the Indian Service show that in 1918 wheat represented 57.9% of the total crop acreage. DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

under irrigation, five storage reservoirs had been built, and many miles of distribution canals were completed in most of the irrigable areas.[11]

After 1918, the increase in irrigated acreage was continuous as additional reservoirs, canals, and other features of the project came into operation. In 1929 about 65,000 acres were irrigated, in 1940 about 77,000 acres, and in 1944 more than 104,000 acres.[12] In the early 1940's, 142,125 acre-feet of storage capacity, 56,345 acre-feet of which had been developed since 1929, were available in thirteen storage reservoirs and two catchment basins. There was a total of 1,076 miles of feeder, main, lateral, and drainage canals and three pumping stations. The large number of reservoirs and the many miles of canals were necessary because the system collected water from more than seventy small streams.[13]

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[11] Map of the Flathead Project, Montana (U.S. Reclamation Service, Washington, 1918); Sperry, op. cit., p. 8.

[12] DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 10-11; Ronan Pioneer, Feb. 27, 1941; Sperry, op. cit., p. 4. Census figures are not used because Lower Flathead Valley includes parts of four counties, Lake, Flathead, Missoula, and Sanders, and those figures are by counties.

[13] Walker, op. cit., p. 4. Reservoirs and their capacities in acre-feet are as follows: in Mission Valley-Tabor, 23,300; Mission, 7,250; McDonald Lake, 8,225; Kickinghorse, 8,350; Ninepipe, 14,870; Lower Crow, 10,350; Pablo, 25,000; Horte, 260; Twin, 600; Hillside, 95; in Jocko Valley--Jocko Lake, 7,600; in Little Bitterroot

The Flathead Irrigation Project is geographically divided into the Camas or Little Bitterroot, Jocko, and Mission Valley divisions. Water users on the project are organized under the laws of Montana into three irrigation districts for administrative purposes. The Flathead Irrigation District includes that part of Mission Valley north of Post Creek, and all of the Little Bitterroot Valley. The Mission Irrigation District includes all of Mission Valley south of Post Creek and Jocko Irrigation Division is confined to Jocko Valley. Each district is governed by a board of commissioners elected by the water users. The board makes recommendations to the project management on questions of policy and future construction programs and makes the necessary assessments against the irrigable areas to provide the funds to pay operation, maintenance, and construction costs, which are a first lien against all lands in the project. The assessments, which vary from 92¢ per acre in the Mission Division to $1.53 in the Camas Division, are certified to the county treasurer and collected as taxes. Construction of the project was

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Valley--Little Bitterroot Lake, 18,000; Hubbart, 12,125; Dry Fork, 3,400, and Upper Dry Fork, 2,700. The pumping station on Flathead River lifts water 335 feet to a concrete lined canal leading to Pablo Reservoir, that on Revais Creek lifts seventy-nine feet, and that on Crow Creek forty-three feet. See Sperry, op. cit., p. 50.

financed with federal funds and each of the irrigation districts signed repayment contracts in which it agreed to repay the funds advanced by the government over a period of forty years.[14]

Of relatively minor importance is the irrigation carried on in the Lower Flathead outside of the Flathead Project. Certain lands along several of the creeks were irrigated by Indians in the late 1800's and when the reservation was thrown open to settlement, some of these lands were sold to whites who claimed the water rights. When the irrigation project began, there was much confusion over the status of the claims. The Secretary of Interior appointed a commission to study the situation and that body's recommendations resulted in the recognition of private water rights on about three hundred tracts comprising eight thousand acres. Negotiations were carried on with some success by the Flathead Project for the purchase of the private rights so that more efficient use of the water could be brought about.[15]

On the west lake shore, the Dayton Creek--Lake Mary Ronan Irrigation Project is a group project aimed at irrigating four to five thousand acres in the Dayton,

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[14]Ibid., pp. 9-10, 48; op. cit., p. 4; Ronan Pioneer, April 21, 1938.

[15]Sperry, op. cit., p. 35.

Elmo, and Big Arm areas. Some of these lands now have partial irrigation, partly by pumping from Flathead Lake. The plan of the project is to create storage at Lake Mary Ronan and Dayton Creek by the construction of dams. Part of the Dayton Creek storage would be used to irrigate 1,500 acres on the north side of the creek in the vicinity of Dayton, while the rest, with that available at the lake, would be used to irrigate more than 2,500 acres near Elmo and Big Arm. Development of this project by the State Water Conservation Board has been delayed for lack of funds but assurances have been given that, because of the merit of the project in stabilizing agriculture in the area, surveys and construction will begin as soon as possible.[16]

As of December 31, 1938, more than $7,500,000 had been expended by the government on irrigation facilities in the Lower Flathead. Construction was almost complete, with the exception of betterment and enlargement of canals and the installation of concrete and steal structures, for which the estimated cost of completion was $1,294,690.[17] With a total expenditure of nearly nine million dollars

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[16]Letter from R. J. Kelly, Assistant Secretary, State Water Conservation Board to the writer, July 13, 1951; Daily Missoulian (Missoula, Montana), April 10, 1951.

[17]Sperry, op. cit., pp. 9, 34.

to provide facilities for irrigation, it is fair to ask if such expense was worth the results.

An examination of the condition of agriculture in the area showed that more than water was needed to make the area the garden it was called. In most cases, it was found that the average yield per acre of various crops was not greatly above that obtained where irrigation was not practiced so extensively, for instance, in Upper Flathead Valley.[18] Furthermore, the trend in crop yields in some instances was downward, due primarily, to mineral deficiencies of the soil and lack of the use of commercial fertilizers.[19]

One effect of irrigation was to revive the livestock industry. In addition, the introduction of sugar beets, seed peas, crested wheat grass, red clover, and other cash crops caused a trend away from wheat production. In a study by farmers and extension workers of soil, climate, and other factors prevailing in the Lower Flathead, it was suggested that a successful farming system

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[18] DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., pp. 8-10.

[19] Yields of alfalfa dropped from 1.94 tons per acre in 1940 to 1.76 tons in 1945, of potatoes from 162.9 bushels per acre in 1940 to 124 in 1945, of peas from 18.7 bushels per acre in 1940 to 14.4 in 1945. Walker, op. cit., p. 70. This report indicates that the value of crops per irrigated acreage, after being adjusted to price changes, has steadily decreased since 1934. See ibid., p. 71.

must be based on a livestock-feed crop foundation and include such cash crops as may prove practical to market.[20] Irrigation can best make possible the kind of diversified farming demanded, so it would seem that the sums spent to provide water for the lands will, in the future, make the Lower Flathead more nearly like a garden than it has been. Also, in spite of the fact that the average annual precipitation over much of the area decreased by 25 to 30 per cent between 1934 and 1940 and a shortage of water developed even with irrigation, there was no complete failure of crops as there had been before irrigation became established.[21]

In addition to supplying water for irrigation, the Flathead Project is active in another important field, that of supplying electric power to most of the Lower Flathead. Previous to 1931, practically all of the power used in the area was supplied by a small plant on Hell Roaring Creek and distributed over a system owned by the Public Utilities Consolidated Company. In 1931 the properties of this company, then in receivership, were purchased by the United States Indian Irrigation Service.

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[20] DeYoung and Roberts, op. cit., p. 13.

[21] Sperry, op. cit., p. 4.

The year before, after extended negotiations, the Rocky Mountain Power Company secured a license and began building a dam and power house on the site on Flathead River which had been abandoned by the Flathead Project. Due to its equity in the power site by virtue of early filling and original intention to produce power for pumping purposes, the Flathead Project was able to negotiate a favorable contract with the power company. The company was required to deliver to the project up to 15,000 horsepower of energy for pumping and other purposes, at rates varying from one to two and one-half mills per kilo-watt hour. With this power available, the Flathead Project began a program of rural electrification which expanded from a few miles of line serving about eighty-five customers in 1931 to one with more than 410 miles of line and 3,200 customers in 1951. Not only was it possible for the project to expand its service, it was able to provide power to homes and farms at rates generally lower than those obtainable elsewhere in the state.[22]

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Flathead

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[22] Ibid., pp. 7-8; Walker, op. cit., pp. 3-4. A comparison of rates in Lake County, serviced by the U.S. Indian Irrigation Project, Flathead County, serviced by the Mountains States Power Company, and Ravalli County, serviced by Montana Power Company, show that for 200 kw. hr. residential power, the rates were $4.25, $5.39, and $6.33, respectively. Sundborg, op. cit., Appendix Table 2.

Irrigation Project is the important factor in the economic life of most of the Lower Flathead. Without it, or a similar project, it is doubtful that an efficient and workable irrigation system could have been developed, and without irrigation, the area does not (and never has) lived up to the optimistic hopes and declarations of some of its more vocal inhabitants. With irrigation, the valley has a future as an important livestock, dairying, and cash crop area, with most of its people enjoying the benefits of adequate income, comfortable, electrified homes, and not least, green fields.

In the field of horticulture, too, the Lower Flathead had important development and seems to have a future. As early as the middle '80's there were several bearing orchards along the northeast shore of Flathead Lake[23] and in 1886-87, about forty-five Indians purchased several thousand dollars worth of young cherry, apple, and plum trees from a nursery at St. Paul. While it is doubtful if these were the first orchards planted in western Montana, they were the beginning of what has come to be an

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[23] By 1891, Section 36, Township 27N., Range 20W, on the northeast shore of Flathead Lake had been taken up by squatters. A Mrs. Parrish had lived there 2½ years, while others had been there from three to seven years. Sitler's ranch had a bearing orchard. G. Stuart, First and Second Annual Report of the State Land Agent, 1891-92, p. 9.

important industry in the Lower Flathead.[24]

The shores of Flathead Lake proved very suitable for fruit growing and the industry grew steadily until, in 1945, a total of about five hundred acres along the east and west shores of the lake were planted in sweet cherries alone. In 1941, cherry production totaled about one and a half million pounds, valued at $117,000. In 1949, the crop totaled about 3,200,000 pounds, valued at more than $300,000. It is evident that cherry growing has become of considerable importance not only to the orchard owners but also to the pickers and packers. The cherries are distributed largely by two cooperative associations. The Flathead Lake Cherry Growers, Inc., of Kalispell, with some one hundred active growers, markets most of the fruit grown north of Yellow Bay, and the Flathead Sweet Cherry Association of Polson, markets the rest. Nearly four hundred persons were employed as pickers, sorters, and packers in 1944.

The lake area possesses special advantages for growing cherries. Because of the high altitude, the crop ripens several weeks after those from most other producing

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[24]Ronan, "Annual Report," (1886 and 1887), in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, (1886), p. 179; (1887), p. 138. The Jesuits have claimed the honor of planting the first orchard in Montana at St. Ignatius. See Palladino, op. cit., p. 177n.

districts have left the market, insuring a ready reception and good price for the Flathead product, which is also claimed to have a distinctive flavor. In a normal year, cherries from this area reach eastern markets about August 1, a full month after the Pacific Northwest crop reaches its peak. The average price commanded by Flathead cherries in 1944 was from five to six cents a pound above the price received for those from other areas. Balanced against these advantages is the ever-present threat of a severe freeze, such as that in 1935, which killed virtually every cherry tree in the area, or those in 1943 and 1951 which damaged the fruit buds, thus destroying the crops for those years.

In spite of the danger from frost, which can be reduced by forcing the trees into earlier maturity in the fall, the cherry industry is steadily expanding as new trees come into bearing and sprinkler irrigation comes into use.[25] Though the 1951 crop was largely a failure, it seems likely that in the future, if the weather is normal, cherry production will provide a steadily increasing income and employment for people in the Lower Flathead.

Little notice has been given to the mineral resources

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[25] Sundborg, op. cit., pp. 44-46; Letter from L. A. Campbell, Secretary, Polson Chamber of Commerce, Polson, Montana, June 19, 1951.

of the Lower Flathead, perhaps because they are imperfectly known. It has been said that the geology of the region indicates that important mineral deposits may be present but that the importance of mining as a source of employment and income depends largely upon market demand for the minerals which may be found.[26] Efforts to exploit the mineral resources of the Lower Flathead began as soon as the reservation was open to settlement. Numerous prospectors had examined the area and it was said that it was known that minerals were plentiful on the Indian lands. As soon as the reservation was opened, hundreds of claims were staked.[27]

In the succeeding years there were many reports of rich strikes of gold, silver, copper, asbestos, and even oil, but it was only in the Hog Heaven area that any real development took place.[28] High grade ore was found at

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[26]R. R. Renne and N. Helburn, op. cit., p. 30.

[27]Flathead Courier, May 4, 1910.

[28]In 1910 it was reported that L. A. Colvin located a mine in the Camas area which ran a trace of gold, two ounces of silver, and 14% copper. Ibid., June 2, 1910. In 1911 two mines, the Rocky Gulch and the Ballarat, located near Elmo, reported rich prospects and the Flathead Milling Company was said to have found a rich deposit of asbestos and a seam of copper and gold four and a half miles west of Arlee. Ibid., July 7, 1911; Dec. 29, 1911. John Sullivan and Thomas Barry of Big Arm were reported to have struck a seam of copper and gold three rods wide and several miles long west of Arlee in 1912. Ibid., June 8, 1912. Three rich mines of copper and gold, assaying from

Hog Heaven in 1913 and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company sank a prospect shaft at what was called the Flathead Mine. The ore was found to pinch out on its downward course so work was stopped and the mine was leased. The leasees found the ore body a few months before their lease expired in 1929. Anaconda Copper Mining Company then took over development work and has shipped ore, with few interruptions, until the present time. Total production for the period 1928-33 was about 20,000 tons of ore which yielded approximately 1,500,000 ounces of silver. Lead and gold were also present in the ore but only a small amount of these metals was recovered. Several other mines were started in the neighborhood and though the Flathead Mine is the only producing property in the area, it is felt that further development work will reveal the existence of other ore bodies and that copper may become important.[29] There

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$42.00 to $160.00 a ton were being worked in the Big Arm and Dayton areas between 1915 and 1918. Ibid., January 21, 1915; February 11, 1915; January 24, 1918. Between 1921 and 1924 the Franz Corporation and the Flathead Petroleum Company drilled for oil on Camas Prairie and in Mission Valley after reports that oily water had been found. Ibid., April 28, 1921; June 9, 1921; July 24, 1924.

[29] P. J. Shenon and A. V. Taylor, "Geology and Ore Occurence of the Hog Heaven Mining District, Flathead County, Montana," (State Bureau of Mines and Geology, Memoir No. 17), p. 3-26. Renne and Helburn, op. cit., p. 30; Sundborg, op. cit., pp. 59-62.

is also the possibility that a deposit of pozzolan, a yellow, crumbly rock of volcanic origin used in concrete making, in the Hog Heaven area, may some day be developed. The deposit has been used for making concrete building blocks and early in 1951 the builders of Hungry Horse Dam expressed an interest in it as a source of supply for future exploitation.[30]

Though mining may not make the Lower Flathead the garden that the area's boosters have shouted about, its development would provide additional income and a more diversified economic base.

In the field of recreation there is much room for development. Perhaps no section of the United States is more richly endowed with scenic and recreational attractions than northwestern Montana in general and the Lower Flathead in particular. The name "Flathead country" has become synonymous with "vacation and recreation," not only for the people of Montana, but also for many from all parts of the country. The area possesses unrivaled tourist attractions in Flathead Lake, Mission Range, St. Ignatius mission, the

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[30]Pozzolan used at Hungry Horse was obtained from factory chimneys in Chicago. The dam contractors became interested in the Hog Heaven deposit when threatened with a freight car shortage and increasing freight rates. Hungry Horse News, (Columbia Falls, Montana), March 23, April 6, May 11, 1951.

National Bison Range, the Indian Reservation, and the mineral springs at Hot Springs. Flathead Lake is the center of attraction, so much so that many people settled along its shores so as to better be able to enjoy the recreational advantages offered: boating, swimming, fishing, scenery, and climate. The Mission Range offers unusual opportunities for photographers, while special and local attractions of the area include sites of historical interest, hunting, golfing, and Indian culture.

It was estimated that in the period from 1937 to 1940, tourist expenditures in the area amounted to nearly half a million dollars yearly. This amount declined considerably during the war years but since that time, it has probably doubled or tripled. The number of people who received the greater part of their income from the tourist industry probably numbered near two hundred in 1950. These figures may be impressive, but it is probable that they could be greatly increased if definite and concerted efforts to do so were made.[31]

Some of the elements of a program which would turn the natural attractiveness of the Lower Flathead into economic gain are fairly obvious. Perhaps the first requirements are

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[31] Sundborg, op. cit., pp. 63-72; Ronan Pioneer, April 21, 1938; Renne and Helburn, op. cit., p. 28-29; L. A. Campbell, op. cit.

better publicity and better accommodations. Publicity should not be on a piece-meal basis but should be a concentrated, cooperative effort. Existing hotel and cabin camp facilities, especially those around Flathead Lake, leave much to be desired. They are not adequate to accommodate the number of visitors who come and, in general, are not architecturally appropriate to their natural setting. One very great need is for attractive eating establishments, streets, and buildings.

Other steps which could be taken to attract more tourists include greater efforts to safeguard and increase the supply of game, fish, and birds, the development of winter sports, and improvement and extension of transportation facilities to make additional scenic spots accessible. In addition, better swimming facilities are needed, efforts should be made to preserve, mark and develop historic sites, and events such as Indian dances, regattas, golf tournaments, and perhaps a cherry blossom festival should be widely advertised. Indian handicrafts could be a more important source of income and the revival of lake navigation to provide extensive excursions would add to the attractions of the area.

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